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ABSTRACT

Education Matters, with the agreement of the Edna Clark McConnell Foundation and two San Diego City, California, middle schools, has been studying the ways in which these two schools have been organizing professional development to improve teaching and learning in the context of San Diego's reform agenda. The Clark Foundation had awarded funds for peer coach/staff developers at three schools, but, in fact, the staff developers, for a number of reasons, including union opposition, were not provided. Two of the schools used their existing resources and their allotted Clark Foundation monies to develop their own in-house coaching models designed for teachers' specific staff development needs. Researchers interviewed 11 teachers, coaches, and administrators at 1 school, and 15 at the other. Also interviewed were consultants who worked with the schools. Additional interviews were held with teachers, coaches, and administrators in the spring, after the efforts had been implemented for some months. Both schools were successful in creating collaborative, instructionally focused cultures in which the school district's "Blueprint" defined the focus of educators' work and teachers understand the importance of professional development. The task of developing instructional capacity in these schools has required considerable skill, ingenuity, and risk-taking on the part of the principals. The design at one school, which had provided two teachers with a reduced teaching load so they could take on peer coaching, seems more effective than the design at the other that calls for substitutes coverage so that coaches can coach colleagues. (SLD)

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Growing Instructional Capacity in Two San Diego Middle Schools

A Report
prepared for
The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper

June 2003

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INTRODUCTION

Education Matters, with the agreement of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Montgomery and Wilson middle schools, has been studying the ways in which these two schools are organizing school-based professional development to improve teaching and learning in the context of San Diego's reform agenda. The occasion for this work was the Clark Foundation's grant to San Diego to fund additional, district-certified staff developers in each of three underperforming middle schools - Montgomery, Wilson and Mann.[1]

The goals of the Clark grant are to 1) improve student achievement and 2) improve teacher effectiveness. To reach these goals, the district proposed to increase as well as individualize teachers' staff development opportunities by providing the schools with more regular, focused support from additional district-certified peer coach/staff developers. EMCF awarded a total of $995,000 to San Diego City Schools to pursue this work during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years. Wilson and Mann each received $355,000 to pay for three peer coach/staff developers, while Montgomery, the smallest of the three schools, received $285,000 to pay for one peer coach/staff developer. These monies were to be used to pay for the peer coaches' salaries, as well as time with outside consultants and substitute days. The funds were awarded to further the district's vision to "intensify and accelerate the capacity for quality instruction with the result of increased student achievement." [Proposal to the Clark Foundation, p. 4]

Our work began in December 2001, when we met with the leadership teams of each school, in the company of George Perry, a consultant and critical friend to the Clark-funded project, to determine how our research and evaluation skills could best support the schools as they garnered the services of additional district-trained peer coach/staff developers. As it was originally conceived, our study was to a) help determine the impact of the schools' increased peer coaching support, b) provide feedback to the schools, and c) consider what larger implications this work might hold for San Diego's district-wide peer coaching system. In short, we hoped that our research would help the district learn from the design experiments and experiences of these schools and apply those findings more broadly throughout the district.

The focus of our work changed, however, when, for a number of reasons, the district was unable to provide additional high-quality peer coach/staff developers to the schools. In fact there were instances in which the schools did not receive any peer coaching support from the district, let alone *additional* peer coaches. Thus, the district's chronic lack of peer coaches constituted SDCS's first and perhaps most fundamental challenge to meeting the demands of the Clark-funded project.

The second challenge was associated with the process by which peer coach/staff developers are

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[1]Though we visited Mann Middle School as part of our initial inquiry, in light of the district's difficulty in implementing the Clark project and that particular school's involvement with the state and the presence of a new principal who needed to accommodate both the state and district demands, we agreed to focus our subsequent work on Montgomery and Wilson.

placed at schools. Because the individuals filling these positions are teachers, the district cannot assign them where they are most needed. Rather, peer coach/staff developer placements are arranged by agreements between the school and a particular peer coach/staff developer. In other words, peer coaches may reject positions at certain sites in favor of work they are offered at 'more desirable' schools. In the past, the district has had difficulty persuading peer coaches to accept assignments at low-performing schools. This limited district control over peer coach assignments may have further compounded the peer coach staffing problems at Montgomery, Wilson and Mann.

Third, while the district was able to produce some candidates for the peer coach positions at these schools, these candidates were not always sufficiently qualified for the job. Principals expressed great unease about hiring peer coaches who did not have as much knowledge and skill as the schools' most expert teachers. Principals reported that they could not justify paying peer coaches who had not yet mastered the literacy strategies and/or how to work with adult learners; nor did principals feel they could devote the time and energy necessary to train these individuals to become effective peer coaches.

Finally, the turnover rate among staff developers is high. As a result, even when the district was able to assign peer coaches to the schools, these individuals were often in place for less than a full school year. In some cases, these peer coaches were quickly promoted to administrative positions within the district. Other peer coaches decided to return to the classroom full-time, while still others chose to leave the district entirely. Whatever their impetus for departing, the constant flux of peer coaches hindered the schools' ability to move forward with the work originally outlined in the proposal to the Clark Foundation.

Given the district's persistent lack of peer coaches, its inability to assign coaches to the schools in greatest need, its difficulty in providing well-qualified candidates to the schools, and its high attrition rate among peer coaches, it is not surprising that the schools in our sample struggled to obtain adequate peer coaching support. Despite the Clark funding for additional peer coaches, Montgomery did not have any district-certified peer coaches during the 2001-2002 school year. During the 2002-2003 school year, two of the school's in-house Professional Developers obtained district certification. While Wilson had district-certified peer coaches as well as school-trained peer coaches during the 2001-2002 school year, it faced the prospect of losing almost all of its coaching capacity by the end of that school year.[2] A staff developer who would be certified by the district began to work at Wilson in February 2003 and a school-based staff developer became the school's Literacy Administrator.

In addition to the peer coach staffing problems, the schools encountered other difficulties in implementing the Clark grant. The principals of Mann and Montgomery, who had helped shape the Clark proposal, were assigned to other district positions early in the 2001-2002 school year. The principal of Wilson took on additional, district-focused work by the middle of that school

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[2]Montgomery had a district-trained peer coach/staff developer briefly at the start of the 2001-2002 school year. However, she left to take another position.

year and left her position completely before the end of the 2001-2002 school year. Each of these vacancies was subsequently filled by a brand new principal, none of whom had prior administrative experience (although the new principals of Mann and Wilson had been peer coach/staff developers). The enormity of the principals' task in beginning their careers as principals while, simultaneously developing and sustaining the Clark-funded work can hardly be overstated. The principals, their leadership teams, and instructional leaders met monthly with George Perry to address the goals of the funded work, but our data reveal that the schools had no direction from the district about how to proceed. These principals, committed to the project's original goal, "to improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness" (Proposal to the Clark Foundation, p. 5), drew on the support provided by George Perry and other professionals in the district, and on the expertise of teachers in their schools to develop their own strategies for improving teaching and learning.

In light of these circumstances, our work became focused on what the schools were attempting in order to support implementation of the Blueprint in the context of the district's a) increasing instructional demands, and b) insufficient and highly transitory supply of appropriately trained district peer coach/staff developers. Though the Clark project and its proposed peer coaching experiment were never implemented, Montgomery and Wilson utilized their existing resources (namely a small core of highly skilled, highly motivated teachers) and their allotted Clark funds to develop their own in-house coaching models, each designed to meet teachers' specific staff development needs. Education Matters believes that this school-based work is well within the spirit of the original Clark Proposal, that it is valuable in its own right, and that, as a set of design experiments, it constitutes a unique and thoughtful approach to improve teaching and learning in light of the district's Blueprint and limited peer coach/staff developer supply.

Data Collection and Analysis. During the 2001-2002 school year, Education Matters' researchers began their work by attending a one-day meeting in January 2002 led by George Perry and Jennifer McDermott, another critical friend to the project, and attended by the principals of Mann, Montgomery and Wilson middle schools along with these schools' peer coach/staff developers and teachers who were considering whether to take on peer coach/staff developer roles. The purpose of the meeting was to explore the role of peer coach/staff developers in light of the schools' professional development needs and ongoing efforts to improve implementation of the district's Literacy Framework.

In April 2002, we interviewed eleven teachers, coaches and administrators at Montgomery and fifteen teachers, coaches and administrators at Wilson.[3] These interviews focused on the work these individuals were doing to improve their own teaching practice as well as that of their colleagues. And, they focused on staff development plans for the 2002-2003 school year.

We returned to each school in October 2002 to conduct another round of interviews and to

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[3]We are using the generic term "coach" to refer to anyone in these schools who has a formal role helping teachers improve their practice. We include as coaches the Literacy and Math administrators as well as district-certified peer coach/staff developers.

observe the teachers in our sample teaching their own classes. During this time, we interviewed and observed twelve teachers at Montgomery and interviewed, as well, the principal and Literacy Administrator. Our sample of teachers included the two teachers serving as peer coach/staff developers as well as the Lab Teachers. At Wilson, we interviewed and observed nine teachers and interviewed the principal and science-focused peer coach/staff developer who became the school's Literacy Administrator during the 2002-2003 school year.

At Montgomery, our interviews included teachers who were and were not serving in a formal coach role. And, they included teachers who were working with the coaches. At Wilson, we interviewed only those teachers who were planning to take on formal coach roles.[4] Because they had not yet begun to observe the teachers they would be coaching, we did not interview those teachers.

Finally, during both the April 2002 and October 2002 visits to the district, we interviewed Institute administrators and consultants who worked with the schools. Those interviewed included: Wilma Kozai, Wendy Ranck-Buhr, Catherine Casey, Ginny VanBenthuysen, and Kimiko Fukuda.

On December 10, 2002, Education Matters facilitated and participated in Montgomery's Boston-based school visit to the Mary Lyon School to learn about Boston's Collaborative Coaching and Learning Model (CCL). During the visit, Montgomery's principal and peer coaches observed at the Lyon School and later debriefed with the school's coach and principal about the challenges and impact of implementing collaborative coaching cycles.

Education Matters' researchers returned to Wilson in February 2003 and May 2003 and interviewed a total of twenty-eight teachers, coaches and administrators including the school's Literacy Administrator and Literacy Peer Coach. We spoke to teachers with formal coach roles and to the teachers with whom they were working. During our May visit, we also observed a school-based professional development session led by the principal, Bernadette Nguyen.

We returned to Montgomery in March 2003 and interviewed sixteen teachers, coaches and administrators. Our interviews included teachers who were serving in formal coach roles as well as teachers who were receiving coach support. Although we focused primarily on the coaching supports within the English/Language Arts department, we also interviewed the Math Administrator and Math Peer Coach. In May, we interviewed Montgomery's principal, Lamont Jackson.

In addition to these school site visits, on February 4, 2003 Education Matters' researchers attended the first of a series of meetings that included Hayes Mizell of the Clark Foundation, Alan Bersin, San Diego's Superintendent of Schools, several other district administrators and the principals of the three schools participating in the Clark-supported work. We attended another in

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[4]We learned during our interviews that some of the sample teachers had decided not to take on this role during the current school year, but had plans to continue supporting their colleagues on an informal basis.

this series of meetings on March 19, 2003 and reviewed the minutes from these meetings and the ones we could not attend.

All interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed, coded and analyzed in light of the purposes of this evaluation. Detailed narratives were written for each of the classroom observations. We want to note that all participants were generous in granting us their time and their insights.

Major Findings. Our data analysis leads us to conclude the following:

- Montgomery and Wilson have been successful in creating collaborative, instructionally focused cultures in which the Blueprint defines the focus of educators' work and in which teachers understand that a) part of their job as professionals involves improving their own practice, b) their school includes teachers and administrators who can help them improve that practice, and c) they share responsibility for helping their colleagues as well as for learning from them.

- The Blueprint and its associated Literacy Framework provide the instructional content of teachers' collaborative work. The Framework, in this way, provides essential instructional coherence for the schools' professional development work.

- The task of developing instructional capacity in these schools has required considerable skill, ingenuity, and risk-taking on the part of the principals. The task would be challenging for any principal; it is especially challenging for first and second-year principals who are simultaneously attempting to master the operational side of their schools.

- Principals have been key to the successful design and implementation of in-school peer coach positions. However, they could not have been so successful without the strong commitment of their teachers to implement the Blueprint strategies.

- The professional development underway in these schools supports the continuous development of teachers' instructional capacity with the Literacy Framework, and may, as a result sustain instructional improvement in the context of a) frequent teacher and principal turnover and b) an insufficient supply of high quality district-certified peer coaches.

- The design of coaching support developed at Montgomery, a design that provides two teachers with a reduced teaching load so that they can devote most of their time to coaching seems more effective than the design developed at Wilson which depends on full-time teachers having substitute coverage in order to coach their colleagues. Although the teachers at Wilson wanted to retain their full-time teaching loads, they and the teachers they coached realized the significant constraints this organization places on classroom peer coaches' ability to coach.

We begin this report with a brief background description of each school and the ways in which it responded to the absence of district staff developers. Then, we describe the capacity that the in-house coaches have for their coaching role, how they learn to coach, and what teachers are learning as they work with the coaches. Throughout this discussion, the data that we provide demonstrate that the content of coaches' work, and the focus of teachers' learning is tightly tied to the district's Literacy Framework. Following this discussion, we report on teachers' views of the coaching support they receive and we consider the significance of these findings for the improvement of instruction in these two schools. In the next section of the report, Implications, we review the coaching designs implemented at each school and the impact they have produced. Then, finally, we consider the challenges associated with implementing the coaching models and the implications of what we have learned for the schools themselves, and for the district as a whole.

THE SCHOOLS

Montgomery Middle School. Montgomery, a middle school with approximately 790 students, is characterized by high turnover rates in both its adult and student populations. When Lamont Jackson began his first experience as a principal in August 2001, he was Montgomery's fourth principal in three years. The vice principal and Math Administrator as well as a number of other front office personnel were also new to Montgomery that year. Only the Math Administrator had any prior administrative experience. Many teachers at Montgomery were also new to the profession.

The principal's realization that he, alone, could not solve the coaching problems facing his school was a turning point for Montgomery and marked the beginning of the school's efforts to create an internal coaching structure. At its inception, Montgomery's internal coaching structure consisted of four teacher leaders, two experienced English Language Arts (ELA) teachers called "Professional Developers" who were released from their classrooms part-time (all but one class each day) to coach other teachers and plan staff development, and two ELA Lab Teachers who retained a full class schedule but opened up their classrooms to share best practices with their colleagues.[5] The principal worked collaboratively with teachers to develop these roles, and though they have evolved over time, their purpose remains the same - to support teachers in an ongoing, non-evaluative way.

> *I thought about the idea of peer coaches and I started talking to the staff. I thought teachers needed to be a part of that conversation, and some important things came out of that. We ended up brainstorming, and I thought, the best way to pursue this was to look at some teachers that we had here, sort of build it within. One of the strengths of this site was that we had some strong teachers,*

[5]Montgomery also has a Professional Developer who is focused on math and a Math Administrator. Our work at Montgomery, however, focuses primarily on ELA teachers, their peer coaches and the Literacy Administrator.

and so my idea was to take some teachers out of the classroom and provide some staff development for the [rest of the] teachers in smaller groups. Lamont Jackson, Principal

As a result, in January 2002, after much deliberation, the principal reassigned a number of teachers to make better use of existing staff expertise while releasing the Professional Developers to begin their staff development work. During their non-teaching, release time, these Professional Developers would a) observe and provide feedback to other teachers, b) arrange for teachers to observe in the Lab Teachers' classrooms [see below] and in one another's classrooms, and c) take increasing responsibility for designing and implementing language arts professional development on Wednesday afternoons.[6]

Lab Teachers, who typically had fewer years of teaching experience than the Professional Developers, were to make use of their discrete expertise with particular literacy strategies. For example, a Lab Teacher might demonstrate expertise with one or more components of the workshop model, perhaps mini-lessons. In that case, other teachers would be advised to observe this Lab Teacher if they wanted to learn more about this aspect of their instruction. In this way, Lab Teachers opened up their teaching practice to peer scrutiny and helped develop a school culture in which instructionally focused professional development became a part of teachers' daily work. (See Appendix A for a diagram of the support structures at Montgomery.)

By the end of the 2001-2002 school year, our data indicate these roles were well-accepted in the school. Many teachers in our sample lauded the help provided by the Professional Developers. They, along with the principal, reported that the quality and relevance of Wednesday professional development had increased under the leadership of the Professional Developers. While not many Montgomery teachers had chosen to observe the Lab Teachers, a few had. In addition, teachers from other schools had come to observe those classrooms, helping to establish the Lab Teacher position in the school.

When we returned in October 2002, we learned that, with the addition of a Literacy Administrator, the Professional Developers and Literacy Administrator had divided the language arts teachers among themselves for coaching purposes. The Professional Developers were continuing to provide Wednesday staff development, but now, more teachers were involved in the design and implementation of those sessions. And, the school had identified some additional Lab Teachers as a result of new teachers' developing expertise.

Over time, each Professional Developer developed her own coaching community of four or five new teachers. With some exceptions, these groupings resulted from the compatibility of teachers' schedules – common times to observe and meet. However, because of scheduling differences, Professional Developers did not meet with their entire coaching communities at once, and instead worked individually with teachers to observe their classrooms, provide

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[6]The principal hired an additional teacher to teach what had been the Professional Developers' classes.

feedback, and plan future lessons. Professional Developers and new teachers worked together to decide which areas of instruction to focus on and which coaching strategies might prove most effective. Professional Developers played an important role in providing resources (such as professional readings, mentor texts and classroom supplies) to new teachers.

The work of the Professional Developers and that of the Lab Teachers became increasingly integrated during the first half of the 2002-2003 school year. Professional Developers routinely took new teachers to observe in Lab classrooms. These visits often occurred around a specific pedagogical issue such as classroom management or conferencing. After the observation, the Professional Developer, Lab Teacher and new teacher debriefed the lesson and discussed how the new teacher might implement similar teaching strategies in her own classroom. The Professional Developers and Lab Teachers also encouraged new teachers to share their practice with one another, and many of these teachers began opening-up their classrooms for informal peer visits.

Despite the absence of external coaching supports during the 2001-2002 school year, by October of the 2002-2003 school year, Montgomery had succeeded in providing its cadre of new ELA teachers with ample support, supplies, and school-based staff development opportunities. Montgomery identified teacher leaders with the right knowledge and skill to effectively support new teachers, and then gave those teacher leaders the time and the resources with which to carry out this coaching work. The new teachers with whom we spoke said they felt fortunate to be at Montgomery because of 1) the extensive learning opportunities available to them, 2) the sense of support they received from their colleagues and administrators and 3) the non-threatening environment in which their evaluations, observations and staff development took place.

At the end of the 2002-2003 school year much of this work is continuing in the ELA department and is beginning to take hold in the Math Department with the support of a school-based math Professional Developer and the Math Administrator.[7] But there have been some significant changes to the coaching supports at Montgomery. First, during the 2002-2003 school year, the two literacy-focused Professional Developers began participating in district-led coach professional development and were certified as district peer coaches. Second, although some Lab Teachers continue to help plan professional development sessions and offer periodic demonstration lessons for their peers, by in large, their participation in coaching and professional development sessions have become less formal and less frequent.[8] The diminishing role of the Lab Teacher does not appear to be an intentional change in the school's coaching structure, but rather the result of the introduction of coaching "cycles" (described below) as well as the limits

[7]The increased role of the Math Professional Developer and his increased collaboration with the Math Administrator is augmenting the coaching supports available to mathematics teachers at Montgomery. However, both the Math Administrator and Math Peer Coach note that the department's substantial teacher turnover last summer and the new mathematics curriculum this fall have impeded their progress.

[8]Some Lab Teachers expressed disappointment about their reduced involvement in coaching, but noted that they are pursuing professional development opportunities outside of school such as university course-work and/or district-sponsored programs.

of the school's coverage capabilities.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the structure of the Literacy Professional Developers' and Literacy Administrator's coaching communities has changed. Previously, each coach worked with teachers one-on-one so that teachers in the same coaching community might not be working on the same instructional issues. Though the coach might arrange some peer observations within her community, coaching work was primarily conducted one teacher at a time. The coaching communities were a loose configuration of teachers bound together largely by their planning periods and grade levels, rather than by their professional development interests or learning needs.

But after visiting a school in Boston during the National Staff Developers Council (NSDC) conference in December 2002, the principal and peer coaches at Montgomery decided to implement six-week coaching "cycles" in which teachers and coaches would work collaboratively to identify and address their professional development needs. The coaching cycles at Montgomery are an adaptation of Boston's Collaborative Coaching and Learning model in which groups of teachers work with a coach around a particular course of study of their choosing. The teachers then take turns demonstrating lessons related to that topic. These demonstration lessons occur on a weekly basis and are followed by a debriefing session in which teachers discuss the objectives of the lesson, students' responses to the lesson and possible instructional strategies for the next session.[9]

Montgomery piloted this model with one peer coach and five teachers. The teachers took turns hosting demonstration lessons in their own classrooms around topics such as "student engagement." In May 2003 the school planned to expand the cycles so that all ELA teachers would have an opportunity to participate in this kind of professional development. Furthermore, the Literacy Professional Developers plan to participate as learners in a cycle with the Lab Teachers in the hopes that working with these highly skilled teachers will further the Professional Developers' own instructional growth.

At the time of our visit in May 2003, it was not yet clear whether the Literacy Administrator would lead a cycle or if she would lead Wednesday staff development sessions instead. Nor was it clear whether participation in a cycle would substitute for attending the Wednesday staff development. Though these and other logistical issues remain unresolved, the principal has already received proposals from staff, detailing what they would like to work on in their next cycle, why they feel that topic is important, what the stated objectives for the cycle will be, what resources they will need in order to reach those objectives and how they plan to share their learning with others. The principal refers to these unsolicited proposals from teachers as a sign of the cycles' success.

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[9]For more information on the Collaborative Coaching and Learning model (CCL) go to the Boston Plan for Excellence's web site at www.bpe.org. For an evaluation of the first year of this coaching model, go to Education Matters' web site at www.edmatters.org.

And then [the teachers who submitted the proposal] said they'd report back to the department to reflect on what data they've collected in their collaboration. Then [the proposal] says what their needs are – they need coverage a minimum of once a week for the purpose of observing one another. So they obviously want to do some cross-visitations. They're asking for support. At least I know in a year and a half I've created four people, at least, who will say, we can do this on our own, but we need support... [So] you ask me how are the cycle's going? They're talking about the process they went through, and the benefit of working with one another, of looking at student work, assessing their work, looking at the delivery of instruction, the pedagogy. I would say it's exciting. Lamont Jackson, Principal.

Wilson Middle School. Wilson is a large middle school with approximately 1,500 students in grades five through eight. The school experiences considerable teacher and student turnover each year. At the start of the 2001-2002 school year, its principal, Mary Louise Martin, had been at the school for five years during which time she had worked to establish an instructionally focused culture designed to improve teaching and learning. The principal intern at Wilson, Bernadette Nguyen, had been the peer coach at Wilson for the previous two years. As a result, Wilson had the benefit of a principal and principal intern who had worked together for three years.

From the outset of San Diego's Blueprint for reform, Martin insisted that the school use the district's literacy reforms to improve literacy across the curriculum and not only in the ELA department. In her view, the school needed to involve all teachers in improving their literacy instructional skills so that students would be able to access written material in all content areas. In addition, the principal and peer coach agreed that a school as large as Wilson could not rely on the services of just one staff developer, and, therefore, would need to develop considerable in-house coaching capacity to support implementation of the Blueprint.

Toward this end, early in the current reform, Martin did a thorough budget and personnel analysis and found ways to use school-site funds and positions a) to expand the number of staff developers on site to four by changing the job descriptions of existing personnel and reallocating funds, and b) to create similar positions focused on the needs of English Language Learners (ELL) and Special Education students on campus. Martin made this resource allocation choice in light of the potential strength of the staff developer position and based on the need of Wilson's teachers – many of whom were new to the profession – for on-site professional development.[10]

During the next two years, the principal, staff developers, and several teachers who were targeted for teacher leader roles, began thinking about other ways to increase teachers' and students' opportunities to learn at Wilson. The school considered making significant scheduling

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[10] This section of the report, in a somewhat more elaborated form, appeared originally in Education Matters' update report dated February 15, 2000. It can be found on our website at www.edmatters.org.

changes, but decided that the timing was wrong. Instead, it created staff development positions that focused on literacy in science and mathematics. And, Wilson considered developing "lab-site," classrooms where teachers could observe aspects of the Literacy Framework being skillfully implemented and then talk with lab-site teachers about their work. As a peer coach, Nguyen, spent some of her time supporting teachers who were identified as able to take on the lab-site leadership role. At the same time, Martin and Nguyen encouraged teachers to pair up with one or two colleagues so that they could help each other build their expertise with the Literacy Framework strategies. A number of such "buddy" groups formed and teachers involved in them began to observe one another, peer conference, and read and discuss relevant literacy-focused professional literature.

During this time, through classroom observations, the principal and literacy staff developer noticed that some teachers were moving ahead quickly with implementing the district's literacy strategies while others were struggling with understanding the concepts as well as with implementation. They also realized that gaps between these two groups were large enough to make it unwise to provide professional development to ELA teachers, in particular, as a department. Using a rubric Martin developed to informally assess implementation, Martin and Nguyen noted where teachers were on this rubric and grouped them so that they could participate in professional development designed to meet their specific learning needs. The rubric also helped the school identify where teachers in other content areas were with respect to using literacy strategies with their students. The four staff developers who were in place at the start of the 2001-2002 school year, came out of the higher implementing group of teachers and were considered capable of increasing the depth and breadth of teachers' literacy expertise in all content areas.

But, having put in place the four staff developers and a plan with which teachers could begin to learn from one another, Martin knew by December 2001 that Wilson would be losing most of its carefully chosen peer coaches due to promotion into other positions and personal circumstances. Wilson's leadership, which now included Nguyen as a principal intern, felt that, given the school's size and the needs of its students, the school would need to explore yet other ways in which to harness the school's extant capacity to create additional teacher learning opportunities. The occasion of a mid-January 2002 meeting funded by the Clark Foundation sparked the idea of classroom peer coaches.

Martin brought to that meeting a group of nine or ten teachers who, in her view, were among fifteen at the school who had the requisite qualities to take on some kind of coaching role. These teachers a) demonstrated sound instructional practices, b) had the ability to work with a range of students, c) were respected by their colleagues, d) were willing to ask pointed questions in front of colleagues at professional development sessions, and e) were articulate in front of a group. Martin hoped that one or more of these teachers would become peer coach/staff developers.

At the January meeting, this group brainstormed with Martin about the possibility of taking on the peer coach role. But, even while they agreed they would like to help their colleagues, especially those new to teaching, most teachers in the group argued that they did not want to

leave the classroom.[11] Out of this day's work developed the seed of an idea about what would become Wilson's team of "classroom peer coaches." At subsequent meetings, Martin, Nguyen, and the group of teachers refined the idea of developing coaches who would remain in the classroom but would have some release time during which they could coach a colleague. They discussed what the role would involve and began school-based professional development to support these teachers in taking on the new role. (See Appendix B for a diagram of the support structures at Wilson.)

Late in the spring of 2002, Martin took a district level position and the principal intern, Bernadette (Bernie) Nguyen, was named as the school's new principal. As a result, despite the change in leadership, teachers experienced great continuity in the school's focus and organization. Bernie was committed to further developing the in-house coaching capacity that she and the former principal, along with a core group of teachers, had worked so hard to develop.

At the time of our October 2002 data collection visit to Wilson, the classroom peer coaches, in most cases, had not yet begun to observe the new teachers to whom they were assigned. This aspect of their work was to begin the following week when substitute teachers would be available to cover their classes. Nonetheless, the classroom peer coaches began helping new teachers as soon as they arrived on campus in July 2002. New teachers spent their first month at Wilson observing, planning and in some cases even demonstrating lessons with their classroom peer coaches. Furthermore, classroom peer coaches helped new teachers by meeting with them during "prep" periods or before or after school. The classroom peer coaches participated in additional, whole-day professional development sessions led by the principal and designed to hone their coaching skills. They were also involved in planning and facilitating school-wide professional development on the Wednesday release days and were engaged in planning a whole day of professional development in November.

By the time of our February and May 2003 data collection visits to Wilson, classroom peer coaches had implemented their new roles and were able to talk with us about their experiences. In addition, the school now had a district-certified Literacy Administrator (who had been a science-focused peer coach/staff developer), a Math Administrator, and a soon-to-be district-certified peer coach. As a result, coaching capacity at Wilson had increased in scale and complexity, and the principal needed to determine how best to allocate the different types of coach support. After trying a number of different organizations and pairings of teachers and coaches, and in light of the district's desire to have its trained coaches work with teachers who, themselves might become coaches, Nguyen settled on a plan that enabled her to coach those teachers who were functioning as the classroom peer coaches. For the most part, the classroom peer coaches worked with new teachers and teachers who were new to Wilson even if they had prior teaching experience. And, the Literacy Administrator and district peer coach worked with the rest of the ELA teachers.

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[11] Nguyen could not attend this meeting due to a professional development obligation associated with her principal internship.

The classroom peer coaches with whom we spoke coached teachers across content areas and grade levels.[12] They had time to observe and meet with the teachers they coached as a result of having substitute coverage for their own classes. Although the classroom peer coaches found some aspects of their work rewarding and successful, for the most part, they struggled with frustrations that arose from its organization, from having to leave their students once-a-week with a substitute; from last minute changes in the substitute's availability; from too little time to coach and debrief with their teachers; and from some of the coached teachers' resistance to their assistance.

The teachers with whom we spoke, overall, supported the idea of classroom-based peer coaches.[13] They appreciated having teacher colleagues in support roles and agreed that their colleagues often had valuable expertise to share. Those who were new to Wilson and had the opportunity to be coached in July 2002, at the end of the school year, reported being well-prepared for the start of the next school year. But, like the classroom peer coaches, these teachers described problems with the organization and implementation of the work. Coached teachers also wanted more time with their coaches as well as coaches who taught the same grade level so that they could get help with specific curriculum planning. Near the end of the 2002-2003 school year, everyone we talked with at Wilson agreed that the first year of their experiment with classroom peer coaches had led them to want to continue having such a role at Wilson even if they themselves did not want to continue implementing the role. They agreed that it would be worthwhile to reflect on the first year of the experiment in order to redesign the role and its implementation, where necessary, in light of their experiences. Indeed, a couple of classroom peer coaches suggested that they might like to have a reduced teaching load – like the Professional Developers at Montgomery – so that they could do a better job of coaching and not feel that they were neglecting one of their classes.

The principal agreed with the teachers' assessment of the first year of implementation and planned to meet with her entire coaching cadre late in June to determine how to revise the coaching model for the 2003-2004 school year. This June discussion would also focus on how to further improve the July 2003 experience of teachers new to Wilson in light of the success of this component of the coaches' work the previous July.

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[12]Classroom peer coaches came from Wilson's science, ELA, and math departments and coached teachers within their content area with some exceptions in the case of special education. However, classroom peer coaches did not always coach teachers who taught at their grade level. For example, a seventh grade science classroom peer coach might coach an eighth grade science teacher or a science teacher who also taught math. As a result of the challenges associated with providing coverage, a science classroom peer coach might be scheduled to observe such a teacher when she was teaching math rather than science.

[13]A very small number of teachers do not support the classroom peer coach role and have doubts about the coaching role altogether. They raise questions about the value of taking a "good" teacher out of the classroom and they suggest that if such a teacher is taken out of the classroom, by definition she is no longer a peer. In addition, one or two of these teachers reported that they doubt the value of all the "reflection on practice" that goes on at the school.

Summary: School-Based Responses to Scarce Human Resources. Montgomery and Wilson have created a number of different teacher leader roles that engage teachers in collaborative, instructionally-focused work with their colleagues. These teacher leader roles include Professional Developers and Lab Teachers at Montgomery; classroom peer coaches at Wilson. Teachers who have taken on these leadership roles now provide one-on-one and/or collaborative coaching support to their colleagues and participate in the design and implementation of small group/department level professional development.

In order to establish these roles, the schools had to develop new organizational arrangements. These include part-time teaching schedules for the Professional Developers at Montgomery and the use of substitute teachers at Wilson to provide time for the classroom peer coaches to observe and/or meet with the teachers they are coaching. In addition, both of these schools have differentiated their department-focused professional development sessions so that teachers' opportunities to learn are better targeted to teachers' needs.

Until this point, we have described the organizational changes made in these two schools that enable them to provide peer coaching to teachers. Now, we want to turn to a closer analysis of what the peer coaches know – their capacity to support their colleagues – and what they do.

COACH CAPACITY

What Do We Mean by Capacity?[14] In order to work effectively, coaches must have a) a good understanding of the district's Literacy Framework and the content area in which they are coaching, b) experience teaching with the Framework so that they have firsthand, working knowledge of what is involved in using the strategies and getting better at them, c) habits of mind that lead them to be reflective about their own practice, d) a willingness to open their doors to observation by others, and e) the sensitivity and skill required to work with adults in a supportive, non-threatening way. While we do not have a formal rubric with which to assess coaches' understanding and skill in these areas, we are convinced by our own data collection that the teachers who principals' have chosen to fulfill these varied roles are capable of helping their colleagues implement the district's Literacy Framework.

Certainly, the coaches vary in their knowledge and skill. Some have been teaching for a long time with strategies similar to those embedded in the Literacy Framework; others are newer to the approach; still others are quite new to teaching and yet have demonstrated the capacity for instructional leadership with both their new and veteran colleagues. Our own classroom observations, followed by coaches' reflections on their use of the literacy strategies, increase our conviction that the teachers taking on these roles have a great deal to offer their colleagues even as they themselves work to improve their own knowledge and skill. Their colleagues' responses to their coaching, in addition, confirm that they also have the interpersonal skills necessary for

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[14] In this next section of the report, which describes the work of the Professional Developers, Literacy and Math Administrators, Lab Teachers, and classroom peer coaches across schools, for the sake of simplicity, we use the term "coach" to refer to all of these roles.

successful coaching.

Because we have not observed coaching sessions as part of our data collection, as proxy evidence of coaching capacity, we next present examples of coaches' thoughts about their own teaching and about how they go about coaching others. And, we offer the voices of those who have been and continue to be coached as additional evidence of coaching capacity and of the focus and value of that capacity for further instructional improvement at Montgomery and Wilson.

Coaches Reflect on Their Teaching and Coaching. It is reasonable to assume that successful coaches must be able to reflect about their own practice in order to understand how careful reflection can lead to improvements in practice. The coaches in these two schools reflect on their own work alone as well as in the company of others. They recognize the contribution that reflection makes to their own development. This has convinced them of the value of encouraging their colleagues to reflect on their own teaching. The following coach comments demonstrate reflection and reveal that these coaches recognize their own areas of growth as well as areas in which they need further improvement.

> *I think my conferring is starting to grow. A couple of years ago, it was very surface level: What book are you reading? What page are you on? Not too much about their actual process. And that's something that I'm working on this year: how to sit down and really uncover a student's thinking about what they're doing, especially when they're reading. When they're writing, I feel like it's much easier to confer, because there you can look at it, and I can immediately give them a suggestion, or ask them a question. But with the reading, it's that process of figuring out what questions to ask them, that will get them to actually show me what's actually going on, while they read.* Coach A

> *In watching another teacher, sometimes it helps me reflect on what I'm doing. It helps me to look at what I'm doing. When [the other teacher is] teaching a guided reading lesson, the questions that she asks, the way she introduces the lesson, it could be some of her methods or techniques she uses, it helps me sometimes to adjust or adopt [something].* Coach B

> *I believe that as long as you are reflective, you're at your best, because then you will always see what changes you can make. If you're making changes, I believe that's best practice, as long as you're reflecting on what your kids need the next day. You're at your best if you can really assess: These three didn't get it, these four did, these kind of got it. Then you meet their needs today and adjust their learning for tomorrow. I don't see how you could go wrong. ....We're determined to maximize the opportunity and the experiences, and collaboration with each other to become better teachers. And the best way to do that is to have as many peer coaches that work with each other as possible, to build a community of reflective teachers, to get out of that "I taught the greatest lesson today" culture,*

and into the "You know, I was thinking, after I taught that, something I could change is..." That's where we're trying to get. Coach C

These coaches do not think they have perfected the literacy strategies. They know that they must go deeper with their own use of the Literacy Framework. They are articulate about what they need to improve and can reflect on their own teaching as well as on that of their colleagues. They speak of their challenges with the literacy strategies with considerable knowledge about how they can improve their practice and considerable commitment to doing so. Coaches talk about themselves as learners who are learning along with those they are coaching. They talk about the school culture as one in which it is appropriate to be an adult learner. And, they point out the important role principals play in creating a climate for adult learning.

I was very much impressed with Lamont's leadership and the things he had to say... The things he mentioned that he values in teachers, and lots of talk around, how do you make a teacher reflective, what tools do you give a teacher so that the teacher, him or herself, can improve rather than telling teachers, this is what you have to do. What tools do you give teachers to become reflective so that they can see, themselves, what needs to be done? Lots of teamwork. He listened to his peer coaches, and you could see that when he was shaping his opinion, he took their opinion into his consideration. Coach D

She just comes right out and says, "Is anyone perfect? No. Are we all learning? Yes. Well, how did you all come to that conclusion? This year, let's all put our learning out there. We're all still learning, I have unanswered questions." She doesn't set herself up to have all the answers, so we're not trying to measure up to this mystery perfect teacher. She's put herself in our learning boat with us, whereas before, you either made it or you didn't make it. So the tone that she has set is that it's a safe environment to admit you don't know what's going on in your classroom and you need help, and if you need a peer coach, it's a good thing, because you used wisdom to say you needed a peer coach. So it's the savvy thing now. If you're in education now, you're cool if you have a mentor. Coach C

In addition to understanding the value of reflecting on their practice and thinking of themselves, and not just others as learners, these coaches understand that their success coaching others will depend on their ability to facilitate their colleagues' reflection on practice and construction of new knowledge that can inform their teaching.[15]

One of the things I'll need to work on is listening to what a teacher needs,

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[15]We think it is important to note that, in taking this stance on coaching others, coaches are employing the same constructivist paradigm with their adult colleagues that the district asks teachers to use with students in the workshop approach to reading and writing. In this way, the theory undergirding coaching as instruction is coherent with the theory that undergirds the reforms designed to improve student learning.

listening to a teacher talk and being able to extrapolate from that what they need, rather than me telling them what I do. That would be something which I really need to work on. It's kind of like, if I write a lesson plan, I know what I'm expecting in that lesson plan. I can't write a lesson plan and then give it to you and tell you to teach it. Coach B

Another coach notes that this approach to constructing knowledge is important not only in one-on-one coaching but in the design and implementation of department or school-wide professional development sessions.

[Planning staff development] is awesome. It's so team oriented; it's so inquiry-based; it's collaborative; it's messy. It's rōlling up our sleeves and really looking into ourselves as readers and tackling difficult tasks, and then [figuring out] how do we transfer that to the staff? How does the staff then transfer that to the students? It's really looking at who we are as readers first, and then, how do we get that across to teachers – not by telling them, but how are they going to figure it out themselves, so they can then transfer that. You don't just tell your kids. It's: how are they going to figure out and make meaning of what they're reading on their own? It's this trickle down effect of [the principal] comes to us with, "OK, here's all the stuff, how are we going to make meaning of this?" So we try it out and we think: "How are we going to transfer this experience to our larger staff?" Thus, the trickle-down effect onto the students. Coach C

Given that the coaches in our sample are relatively new to coaching, and that some of them are relatively new to the teaching profession, their extant reflective habits of mind bode well for their development as teachers and as coaches. And, they bode well for the improvement of teaching in these schools.

Learning to Coach. Coaches may come to their work with a deep knowledge of the literacy strategies, with the ability to reflect on their work and with a strong commitment to use reflection to improve their practice. However, this knowledge is not sufficient for successful coaching. Coaches need to know how to work with other adults in ways that will help them improve their practice. Put simply, coaches need professional development focused on how to coach. We briefly review the strategies underway in each school that are designed to improve coaches' ability to coach.

At Wilson, under the leadership of former principal Martin, the school developed a structured approach to coach professional development. This work has continued into the 2002-2003 year with the school providing release time for ongoing coach professional development.[16] The former principal's understanding of what the coach role would require helped shape some aspects of the form and content of this professional development. The current principal's

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[16]This professional development was interrupted in the spring of 2003 due to the disruption caused by layoff notices and budget cuts for some coach consultant work.

experience as a district-trained peer coach and the coach professional development she received while in that role have shaped additional aspects of coaches' learning opportunities.

Coaches at Wilson engage in a number of activities designed to improve their coaching skill. At the beginning of their development, according to the coaches, they spent time talking about what coaching would involve and the adult issues that might come up in doing the work. Then, they began to practice how to observe a lesson and give feedback.

> *We watched a video of one of our peer coaches teaching, and we've sort of been learning how to script it. So scripting a lesson, and then getting our thoughts together, and then we paired up with another person, and we acted like one was the coach, one was the teacher, and we did a little actual coaching. [We did] a lot of stuff like that, just to get us used to that, and then giving each other feedback on, "You could have said this differently," or "This is what you might want to do differently next time."* Coach E

Coaches have engaged in sophisticated role plays designed to help them practice coaching after having watched a segment of videotaped teaching. The emphasis on role-playing developed out of Nguyen's realization that, when she was a district-trained coach, she would have benefitted from more role-playing opportunities while learning to coach.

> *When I was a peer coach, we did a lot of observing videos of actual lessons, and planning how we would coach this teacher, and talking about it. I don't know that we did a lot of role-playing. I think it would have helped me if I'd role-played more, but I didn't, and I think much of the role-playing part of what we've designed stems from something that I realized, that this would have really helped me if I had had this when I was a peer coach. And in addition to that, because our classroom peer coaches are full time classroom teachers, they don't have the opportunity to coach the way I had the opportunity to coach when I was a coach. They don't have a whole lot of opportunity to make lots of mistakes and learn from those mistakes. This is an opportunity for them to coach and make mistakes in a very safe environment, and learn from those mistakes, so when they go out and coach, they can actually be effective.* Bernie Nguyen, Principal

These coaches have taken a great step forward in making their teaching as well as their coaching part of public practice. Happily, coaches find these experiences instructive and not too frightening. As always, they remain reflective about their work.

> *We actually watched a video of a teacher who's on our team. She brought it, and as we watched her video, we scripted her lesson. Then, at the end, I volunteered to be the coach, and [the teacher] was herself, and I had to go in there, just like I would with these teachers now, and debrief. You [may] think it's easy, but you don't want to give things away. You want to make them do the thinking. It was great practice, it really was. And now everybody will take their turn doing a*

video and then being up there, being the person. So you're vulnerable, and you just do it. It was good. At first I wanted to do it to get it over with, but I really felt like I saw some things that I did in lessons that I reflected on, that I think she could work on. But I was really careful... I tried to really write my questions down to provoke her thinking. And I thought [my debrief] went pretty well. But then, as I understand it, my debrief should be focused. She should pretty much know what I'm getting at, and I think I was kind of all over the place. Coach F

In addition to their opportunities to practice coaching during formal coach professional development, some coaches described other opportunities, as well, in which they can learn more about coaching. For example, one coach described an opportunity provided by the principal.

Over inter-session when Bernie was coaching me on my lesson, my [colleague] was watching me be coached. After Bernie was done coaching me with my lesson, then she coached my colleague. I was able to watch the principal coach my colleague. She's working with both of us. I was able to listen in on something I thought was pretty cool to listen in on. And it was comfortable because I would never feel intimidated to have her listen in on my coaching. I trust [my colleague] and I trust Bernie. So that was really neat. I could see that she was being very non-aggressive. She was basically just guiding, [asking] what do you think? What do you think would happen if? Those kinds of beginning sentences, a lot like a psychologist. That's why I think it's so interesting. Coach G

Coach professional development also addresses the strategies that are at the heart of the school's instructional focus. During the first half of the current school year, for example, Wilson's instructional focus was on improving teachers' questioning strategies so that students have more opportunities to think deeply about the curriculum content they are learning. As this coach explains, coach professional development helped them focus on how to help others with questioning strategies.

During our training sessions [led by principal, staff developer and Math Administrator] we've been talking about what skills we need to develop in order to help other teachers grow, and our big focus has been, how do you get kids to access information from a text? We all struggle with that in our classrooms, we want to become experts on that so that we can coach other people, and so we've been watching videotapes of our peers teach. I'll be taped on Tuesday and then we'll critique that on Thursday, to train us in the language of peer coaching, but also we've been watching videotapes of students reading a text and trying to answer questions about it and realizing their struggles. And we're planning on reading journal articles about strategies we can use. There's a conference in San Francisco, I think, that's about how to teach students to access expository text. So I think we want to tap into all the possible resources we have so that when we do get new teachers, we can say, "Well, we tried this in the classroom. This is how it worked for me. This is how to tweak it." Coach H

Coaches at Montgomery have not had the same campus-based learning opportunities provided to teachers at Wilson, in part because the school did not have the sustained, instructionally focused principal leadership that was a stabilizing factor at Wilson for six years, and in part because Montgomery did not have the benefit of sustained, high-quality coaching from district-trained staff developers. Nonetheless, coaches at Montgomery have had multiple opportunities to improve their coaching and their knowledge of the Literacy Framework as a result of working with consultants who devote time to the school and as a result of attending relevant professional development in other places.

For example, in July 2002 a cadre of coaches from Montgomery attended a literacy-focused professional development institute at Teachers College in New York. Their work during this period of time gave them new ideas about how to organize and implement their roles and the content of their coaching in the 2002-2003 school year. They plan to return to Teachers College in July 2003 to continue this work. As noted earlier, in December 2002, the principal, several coaches and the Literacy Administrator attended the National Staff Development Council annual meeting in Boston. While in Boston, they visited one of the Boston public schools where they observed that district's coaching model. In addition, they spoke with the coach and the principal about the way in which this coaching model supports implementation of Boston's literacy reform which is, in effect, the same literacy approach being implemented in San Diego. Finally, the school's Professional Developers began attending the district-provided coach professional development sessions this year, giving them an opportunity to work with staff developers from other secondary schools as well as with district administrators. In these ways, coaches at Montgomery have had opportunities to develop their own knowledge and skill with respect to literacy and coaching.

In addition to these professional development opportunities, coaches at Montgomery and Wilson have also worked with Jennifer McDermott, a consultant and critical friend to the Clark-funded project. Coaches from the three Clark schools (including Literacy Administrators, Professional Developers, full-time peer coaches, and occasionally, principals and some teachers) meet with McDermott monthly to improve their coaching practice. This work rotates among the three Clark sites. Though everyone has a hand in shaping the agenda for McDermott's visit, the host school typically decides on the day's format and structure. Her visits have included walkthroughs, coaching sessions led by McDermott and by coaches, as well as other debriefing activities.

For example, McDermott has helped coaches learn to work with teachers who have developed considerable expertise with the literacy strategies. By leading one such coaching session, McDermott was able to show an expert teacher (and the observing coaches) how that teacher could re-orient her role in the classroom so that students would have more freedom, control and responsibility over their own learning. McDermott has also helped coaches create coaching plans for individual teachers at all levels of instructional expertise.

Coaches at both schools characterized their work with McDermott as highly valuable and expressed a strong desire to continue participating in this professional development next year.

Getting her [Teacher X] to commit to a goal for the next day is a big priority and the reflection plays into that. Because Teacher X gets so scattered, she's got so many things to think about that it's hard for her to really focus on one thing. Jennifer showed us how to do coaching plans where you and the teacher decide what it is you want to accomplish, and what it will look like if you do accomplish it, and what your plan is, how you're going to work on it together. And that's been a really nice touchstone.[17] Coach A

She's [Jennifer McDermott] wonderful. What we've done basically in the past is we've either gone to one or two observations. Before [observing] we talked a little bit about the teacher, where the teacher is at, what it is she's been focusing on, so we have an idea of what's being attempted, a little bit of a history. Then afterwards we sort of debrief what we saw. Then one of the staff developers at that school site who is working with that teacher, actually debriefs the teacher in front of us, so we get to see what that process looks like. After that's done, either the teacher goes back to the room, or he or she stays, depending on choice, and we talk about the dynamics of that debrief, what we thought was effective, and not really what we thought was ineffective, but more next steps or ideas that we might want to try out for next time. Coach S

Many members of the group also noted the importance of building capacity for a time when McDermott and perhaps other outside consultants will no longer be available to schools. Toward this end, the coaches meet once a month without McDermott in an effort to build such capacity. However, several coaches reported that without formal facilitation these meetings were not as productive as they could be.

When we are on our own, it's not as, just not good; our personalities, the schools' personalities are so different, and without a facilitator there making the connections for us, it's really hard. It's very, very difficult. We're going to work on that. We're coming up with protocols and she's [McDermott's] sending us a bunch of stuff on how to facilitate ourselves. Coach C

Coaches at Montgomery and Wilson have also participated in staff development sessions with Catherine Casey, a literacy consultant employed by the district. Casey has helped coaches and teachers plan units of study, develop broad, year-long curricular themes, and align lesson plans and school-based staff development sessions accordingly. She has also helped principals plan staff development presentations and assisted them in identifying possible school-wide learning needs. Those who have had the opportunity to work with Casey comment favorably on her ability to model instructional practices and on her insights into schools' needs.

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[17] In all within-quote references to teachers, we use X, Y, or Z to indicate such teachers. We do this as a further precaution to revealing anyone's identity.

She would do a lot of modeling of her guided reading lessons. We'd watch her. And then she invited teachers slowly to bring in a group of their four students and teach them a guided reading, non-fiction [lesson], and we would all be the observers and watch. And then we'd coach and partake. It was kind of grueling. It was a great learning experience though, it really was. I found her training pretty valuable. I learned a lot that I could take away. Coach F

Because this coach professional development takes place among a small group of coaches and schools, both Casey and McDermott can target their work to the specific needs and circumstances these coaches face. Coaches at Montgomery and Wilson report that the district-provided professional development also offers valuable learning opportunities. However, it cannot be as specifically needs-focused as the work done with consultants on site.

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF COACHES.

In both schools, coaches have roles that involve coaching individual teachers as well as designing and implementing department or school-level professional development. In addition, coaches open their doors to others who choose to observe them using specific literacy strategies. These coaches are adept at talking about their purposes and strategies in undertaking this work, but we think it is valuable, at this point, to hear the voices of those who are being coached, are observing their coaches' classrooms, and are participating in the group professional development led by coaches. Their voices reveal a) the content of the coaching work, b) the integral nature of coaching to ongoing teaching and learning, c) the positive light in which most teachers view their multiple opportunities for coach support, and the challenges that some teachers face in getting the specific instructional support they need.

We're starting a new unit on how to connect with books personally, and I was kind of stressing about how to talk about emotion with my genre kids, because a lot of times they're not reading books with emotion. I was really nervous about rolling out the lesson, and I had [the coach] come in and watch. Was I using the right mentor text? Was I getting the right responses I needed? Now I'm more comfortable because she and I have been collaborating a lot about what lessons to do and ideas. She came in and she was watching me and she wrote down more ideas, questions I could ask the kids, because I don't think I was questioning them enough. So she gave me questions to ask them, which helped out a lot. Teacher I

[The coach] who was teaching was doing a lesson on writing with stamina. She had all the kids come down to the rug, she talked to them about how to write with stamina, what it means, etc. And then she gave them a mentor text, she modeled it herself in her own writers' notebook. She said, "Somebody get a watch and time me." And she wrote and wrote and wrote. They said, "Time," and she stopped. She did that with the kids. Then, she had them all go back to their desks and she

said, "OK, we're going to see how much we can write in this amount of time." She gave them one more minute, two more minutes to keep on writing. The kids who stopped, she came around and put a little mark on their paper, so that they would visually know that something -- just write, just write -- so they would visually know what was going on. I was able to do that in my class, and it actually worked really well. It really got my kids to start writing and to feel comfortable with writing, and then I stopped doing the marks, it didn't need to happen anymore, because they were able to write. Teacher J

I've actually gone in to see her a couple of times. The first time I went to see her I was having a lot of trouble with the structure of how I was doing a lab. I felt like there were kids everywhere, and fifteen of them had a question, and I couldn't get to them all. It was just too wild. I needed to see how you actually do a lab. So I came in during my prep when she was teaching a lab. [Teacher describes the structure of the lab in detail.] That'[observation] helped a lot. It was a whole new ball-game once I saw that. That made a big difference [in terms of how I structure my labs, now]. Teacher A

In addition to lauding the value of working with coaches one-on-one, teachers indicate that they value the new ways in which department and school-wide professional development are organized and facilitated by the principals and coaches. We begin with principals' thoughts about the value of involving coaches in professional development and how their involvement increases the schools' capacity to respond to teachers' learning needs. As the first principal notes, involving the coaches is smart, because they are in classrooms all the time and know what teachers need. But, it can also be challenging as it engages the principal and coaches in reasoned arguments and requires a willingness to work collaboratively.

Coaches see the staff development needs, they talk to teachers, and [then] provide them staff development, after conversations with me. I think [the positive impact has] been huge. I don't think we would be where we are today had they not been put in that role. Their ability to engage in critical work with me is very important. They pushed back on me, and I need people to do that. Because then they really own the work, and they can facilitate that work you need done to improve instruction. It's not that they just come in and listen to what I want, what I think, what I believe. They really grapple with my ideas, challenge them, and then we come to a common understanding that we all believe will be the best pursuit. Lamont Jackson, Principal

The next principal notes that working collaboratively with teachers around the focus and design of professional development helps ensure that the time teachers spend in the sessions is time well-spent.

I got them to spend time to help me plan staff development. And it wasn't that they were planning every single detail, because I pretty much knew what I wanted

to do, but I wanted their feedback and I wanted them to give me information as to, does this make sense and does this meet your needs, because if it meets your needs, it's probably going to meet the rest of the staff's needs. Bernie Nguyen, Principal

In addition to involving coaches in the design and implementation of this work, both schools have reorganized their Wednesday professional development so that it is better directed to teachers' diverse learning needs.[18]

We've broken into learning groups for staff development, because we have teachers at different levels of growth, different stages in their learning and implementation of instruction. Instead of doing whole group, we may do whole group and do a mini-lesson. For example, in looking at the workshop, let's say there's a big idea we want to teach. We teach that, it might be 15 or 20 minutes, then the groups break up into their individual groups for their learning.... And then we come back at the end of that staff development day and share out. So basically, we have the [workshop] architecture in place for the teachers. Lamont Jackson, Principal

Like we'll have all the genre teachers. That happens quite often. But then you have such a wide range of teachers. You have the ones who have never heard the word "conferring" before, who are fresh in, and you have teachers who have been here for four or five years, and so we sit through conferring when we already know how to do it. And they've started some off-campus, in-service days, they've started to break the teachers down into two groups -- these are the ones who are at this level and these are the ones that need more help at this level. And that's been good. It's kind of strange to divide the teachers, and some have been like, why am I in this group and not that one -- but it's been helpful, I think. Coach K

Most teachers report positively on their Wednesday professional development that may now include small group work as well as whole-department sessions. They also report positively on the facilitation of Wednesday professional development whether the coach is presenting by herself or with other coaches or the principal.

I partnered with her in the staff development presentation. My part was to present to the staff leveled texts and the features of those texts, and what reading behaviors we should see from students who are reading those texts. And what those readers should able to do if they're early reader/transitional reader/self-extending or advanced reader. So I did that presentation, and I had several people come up to me and say "I really enjoyed that in-service" which I was

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[18] Throughout the year, schools have reviewed and revised the ways in which they organize and focus Wednesday professional development to ensure that it meets the needs of the teachers in light of the district's Literacy Framework.

totally stressed out about. I mean, 50 people! Trying to present to them all and keep them managed is very stressful to me. Coach G

The last one they did was on conferring and it was really, it was a great staff development day actually. Two coaches did the literacy component, while another coach did the math component. It was great. You could tell their planning of the staff development was really tight, because it flowed from one piece to the next really well. Their focus was how questions drive student thinking, or how questions push students to think further. Coach L

Well, during our staff development, [the coaches] have taken on just organizing the staff development, and actually they're the presenters in the staff development, and they're both teachers. So everything that they talk about during staff development is pertinent to what we're actually doing. And so that's been great. Prior to that it was administrators and people from the district that I had already seen many times during the new teacher orientation, and it was kind of the same stuff repeated. But the coaches ask the teachers what we need, and we tell them, and they give it to us. So that's been great. Teacher M

However, some teachers note that coaching cannot address all of their professional development needs. For example, when a teacher's coach is from a different grade level or content area, time spent with the coach may take away from time spent on content-specific curricular planning. Many individuals in this kind of coaching situation voiced their need for common planning time with colleagues who teach the same content at the same grade level with the same populations of students.

I would have liked to have the other eighth grade teacher as my peer coach - for curriculum matters. You know this text book? What can I skip? Am I taking too long? Because pacing is such a big thing. Teacher E

I had a problem with the fact that my coach is a sixth grade teacher, so there wasn't much advice she could give me as far as my curriculum or strategies with what I had to teach. So she talked about maybe giving us some time, like me taking out a period where I could go observe other eighth grade teachers and work with them, but that never happened. Teacher H

I'm sure that it would be easier if we could pair up classroom peer coaches, and their respective teachers who were in the same grade level, and we talked about it. It's just that we didn't have the number of teachers to do it. Coach S

Generally speaking, teachers' views of coaches were favorable. Most of the teachers with whom we spoke acknowledged the important role that coaches played in their classrooms and in their schools as a whole. From one-on-one demonstration lessons and debriefings to whole-group

staff development, most teachers found their time spent with coaches to be of great value.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS.

Montgomery and Wilson were supposed to participate in an experiment in which they would be provided with more than the district's normal allocation of staff developers. The Clark Foundation and the district were interested in whether the provision of additional staff developers could increase the rate of teaching and learning improvement in low achieving middle schools. But, the experiment was never implemented. Instead, committed to implementing the Literacy Framework, the schools found themselves participating in home-grown design experiments. Each school had to look inside itself and determine how it could develop its in-house coaching capability absent coaching support from the district, how it could develop the expertise it needed to better serve the instructional needs of its students. Montgomery and Wilson rose to the challenge and each designed a unique response to the need to experiment. These experiments are not fully developed and the final assessment of their impact on quality of teachers' instruction and the impact of that instruction on student achievement is not yet in. But, the experiments have had a promising beginning, and, given the determination, knowledge and skill of these schools' educators, they may well produce positive outcomes in the future.

The Designs and their Implications. Before we consider the impact and the challenges associated with these schools' approaches to developing in-house coaching capacity, we want to review the designs they developed and implemented as well as the contexts in which they were developed. Only by understanding the designs and their contexts is it possible to consider the similarities and differences among what the schools did and the associated impacts and challenges.

Montgomery developed a coaching model that involved the release of two experienced teachers from all but one of their teaching assignments so that they could serve as Professional Developers (coaches) for their colleagues in the English Language Arts department. Coaches began this work early in February 2002 by working with ELA teachers in one-on-one coaching relationships. In addition to these one-on-one relationships, the teachers were organized into groups so that each coach had a group of teachers with whom to work. Montgomery also developed a Lab Teacher role which involved several teachers in opening their doors to their colleagues who would observe their literacy instruction as part of their professional development.

At the start of the 2002-2003 school year, Montgomery gained the services of a Literacy Administrator. ELA teachers were then re-grouped so that some worked with the Literacy Administrator and some worked with each of the coaches. Mid-year, after the coaches and principal observed the collaborative coaching model in use in Boston, they began to implement this approach to coaching at Montgomery. During this school year, Montgomery also expanded its coaching support to mathematics teachers by releasing one math teacher from all but one

teaching assignment so that he could serve as a coach in the math department. The ELA department now had a Literacy Administrator and two coaches; the math department had a Math Administrator and one math coach. Teachers, coaches, and administrators felt that their coaching model worked well organizationally and had great potential to increase the quality of instruction at the school. The school's coaching staff remained stable throughout the 2002-2003 school year and the school had the same principal during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years.

Wilson developed a very different coaching model. First, the school continued its focus on literacy across the curriculum which meant that the school needed coaches who could work with teachers who taught ELA, ESL, special education, social studies, mathematics and science. Second, the school initiated an end-of-the-year, July coaching experience for teachers who would be new to Wilson at the start of the 2002-2003 school year. This coaching component paired those new teachers who were hired by the end of June with one of Wilson's classroom peer coaches. The goal of this pairing was to enable new teachers to learn how to focus on literacy at Wilson as well as develop some knowledge of the school, its personnel and resources. Third, with 1,500 students, four grade levels (5-8), and its goal of infusing literacy across the curriculum, Wilson needed many more coaches than did Montgomery which housed 790 students in grades 6-8 and focused its literacy coaching on teachers who taught ELA.[19] Fourth, at the start of the 2002-2003 school year, no teachers at Wilson wanted to leave the classroom part-time in order to coach. As a result, the coaching model at Wilson relied on the use of substitute coverage for full-time classroom teachers who were released once each week for approximately two periods so that they could coach their colleagues. And, fifth, there were a number of changes at Wilson that complicated the development of its coaching model. Some of the changes were in personnel: Bernadette Nguyen was a first-year principal during the 2002-2003 school year; the school hired a literacy peer coach who began her work early in February 2003; the science-focused coach became certified as the school's Literacy Administrator several months into the 2002-2003 school year.

The advent of the Literacy Administrator and peer coach led to changes in some teachers' coach assignments so that the Literacy Administrator and peer coach could work directly with a small subset of teachers. In addition, Nguyen and the classroom peer coaches realized that some coach-teacher pairings were working less well than others. This led Nguyen to make changes in coach-teacher pairings throughout the 2002-2003 school year in order to improve the impact of coaches' work.

Considering the Designs. Before we describe the impact and challenges of these designs, we want to note that the coaching models at the two schools seem to be operating out of different theories about what will most help students develop literacy skills. At Montgomery, the theory appears to be that the most impact will occur if literacy coaching is focused on ELA teachers. At Wilson, the theory appears to be that the development of literacy skills needs to be a focus within all academic content areas. There are no data, at this point, to suggest whether one of these

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[19]Teachers who worked with special education and English Language Learners were also part of the coaching work at Montgomery since, of course, they focused on literacy with their students.

theories is more likely than the other to lead to the desired outcomes. But there are data to suggest that implementing a literacy-focused coaching-across-the curriculum model that depends on coaches who are also full-time teachers may be an extremely complex endeavor.

- Coaches from content areas other than ELA at Wilson face a double challenge when coaching their colleagues. First, they must attend to the teachers' knowledge and skill with respect to teaching students to read in the content area. Second, the teachers being coached want help with the content of what they are teaching, for example, they want coaches to help them develop curriculum and lesson plans for science, as well as help them learn how to use the literacy strategies in their classes. Coaches in these content areas are torn about where to focus the limited time they have with their colleagues. This challenge occurs far less often when coaches are working with ELA teachers for whom the content and the strategies correspond.

- The design of the coaching model at Wilson seems to create tension between the content orientation of the different departments and the coaching focus on literacy. Within the ELA department, as at Montgomery, there is reasonable coherence between the focus of coaching and the content of teachers' work.[20] However, in science and math departments, for example, coaches and teachers report that when they spend time on literacy, it takes away from the time they could focus on improving content area instruction.[21]

- The design of the coaching model at Montgomery puts ELA teachers in frequent contact with one another and with the coaches who are also members of the department. Teachers' coaching and other professional development work focus on the content of what they need to teach as well as on strategies. There is congruence between the coaching and the content of the department's focus, congruence that is strengthened because the coaches are deeply involved in planning and leading the department's professional development sessions. The result seems to be the development of considerable instructionally-focused collegiality within Montgomery's group of ELA teachers. As a result of the literacy across the curriculum focus, there seems to be less development of a collegial, collaborative, instructionally focused culture within the departments at Wilson.

- Coaches at Montgomery have had more time in which to develop their coaching design and practice implementing it. They began their work in the middle of the 2001-2002

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[20]However, ELA teachers at Wilson raised serious objections to what they have seen as the frequent shifts in instructional focus during the school year; they are concerned about what appears to be a focus on narrowly construed, discrete reading skills to the detriment of reading for meaning, but, they agree that the focus on coaching is, at least, congruent with their department's focus on literacy.

[21]Teachers in ELA as well as in the departments would like to have more time during department meetings to plan together and develop better alignment within and between grade-levels in their content areas.

school year and continued it into the 2002-2003 school year. Assuredly, they made revisions to the model including changes in the assignment of coaches to teachers. Wilson did not begin implementing its model until November of the 2002-2003 school year. As a result, the model is in an earlier stage of development and is going through some of the organizational changes made earlier at Montgomery.[22]

- Coaches at Montgomery literally have more time to coach. They each teach one class per day and are available as coaches throughout the rest of the day, four days each week.[23] This means they can be available to teachers on continuous days as in the "cycles" design or in some other organizational arrangement. In contrast, even if the scheduling and use of substitutes at Wilson had been implemented without complications, it would still be true that teachers and coaches at Wilson would have very little time in which to work together. For this reason, we doubt that the coaching model in place at Wilson would be intensive enough to meet the needs of the teachers being coached.

Given these design differences as well as the elapsed time for implementation, what have we learned about the impact of coaching at both of these schools?

Impact. As these schools conclude the first eighteen months of their respective coaching experiments, we can now begin to take stock of the impact this work is having on teachers, on principals, and more generally, on the collaborative cultures at both schools. While there is as yet no direct correlation between the coaching efforts at Montgomery and Wilson and a marked increase in student achievement, there is reason to believe that coaches' efforts to improve instruction will significantly contribute to that end. Our data suggest that teachers' desire to work with one another around instructionally-focused topics, their ability to reflect upon their own and others' instructional practice and their capacity to apply what they are learning (from coaches, other teachers and professional development sessions) to their own varied student populations is growing. In some cases this growth is rapid, while in others, it is more measured.

Education Matters has witnessed a relatively greater coaching impact at Montgomery than at Wilson, most likely due to the longer duration and greater intensity of Montgomery's coaching model. Montgomery has had greater stability in staffing, more coaching hours per school day, and a higher coach-to-teacher ratio. Consequently, the coaching supports in place at Montgomery are in a later stage of development than those at Wilson. But regardless of the relative pace of the schools' progress, there is no denying that both Montgomery and Wilson are in a different, and indeed better place, with respect to coaching, than when the Clark-funded work first began.

It is important to note, however, that the multitude of professional development opportunities

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[22]Conversations with the Math Administrator and math Professional Developer at Montgomery reveal that math coaching, because it is new, is likewise experiencing its own growing pains.

[23]On the fifth day of each week, these coaches attend district-provided, coach professional development.

that accompany the school-based coaching supports at Montgomery and Wilson make it difficult to measure the impact of coaching as a stand alone strategy for staff development. Improvements in teachers' instruction may be the result of coaching, but they may also be the result of strategies learned in a school-based staff development session, or a district-sponsored workshop or university course-work, or some combination of all four. There are many variables contributing to the growth of teachers at these schools; coaching is one among many important factors.[24]

Though the strategy for assessing the impact of coaching remains elusive, Education Matters has learned a great deal about the status of teachers' professional lives at the two schools. Nearly all of these teachers attribute at least some of their learning and improvement to their work with coaches. In these teachers' estimations, coaching has had a powerful and positive impact on the schools' cultures of collegiality and collaboration, and on their commitment to improving instruction and thereby, student achievement.

First, both coaches and teachers report that, by in large, teachers accept and respect coaches' roles.[25]

> *I'm still bringing up the fact that I'm a teacher: "Oh yes, I recognize what you're mentioning in this conversation because I'm still a teacher." .... As a matter of fact, a great teacher who's a buddy here says, "You know, you don't have to sell that anymore. We completely accept your role here." Jennifer McDermott, our consultant, says that's building an alliance. And I felt, "Yes!" I feel really good that people accept my role. That this really didn't come between me and them as, you know, some sort of person that's going to descend in the classroom and tell you what to do. Because that's not my role.* Coach T

> *I think they're probably happier with the peer coaches in the classroom coaching, than they would be really with someone who's not in the classroom, just because I think it's more, it's peer coaching the way it was meant to be. It's not from a [district] staff developer. It's from someone who's in the classroom, and they go through the same trials and tribulations and triumphs every day together.* Coach S

Second, and almost without exception, teachers – especially those who are quite new to the schools – report that coaches have helped them to improve their teaching. The comments that follow echo this finding and demonstrate the critical role that coaches are playing in teachers'

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[24]The principals at Montgomery and Wilson would like to ascertain the impact of coaching on instruction. Education Matters' work in Boston, San Diego and other districts suggests that this is a daunting task and that it will take some considerable ingenuity for evaluators to develop strategies for measuring the impact of coaching.

[25]Only two individuals in our sample commented negatively on the role of coaches. These individuals doubted the value of coaches' work for anyone except perhaps brand new teachers. These individuals remained skeptical about the benefits of coaching even after working with coaches at their school.

professional growth.

> *Actually, we were very lucky in that they set us up right away with the more seasoned teachers. So I have an advising teacher, and she's worked real closely with me. She goes over my lessons, she observes me. And there's been a lot of workshops that I've attended as well. They kind of hooked me up right away with workshops where I kind of got a basic idea of what I should be focusing on. And then we kind of go over our lessons with our advising teachers. And I got a chance to observe other teachers as well, and see what they are doing, and really what was expected of me and of my students. So as a new teacher, I'm still learning. But it's really helped that I had my advising teachers.* Teacher N

> *They are right there. And I feel like they're right there for everybody. ...They do a great job of meeting the needs of everybody, but still looking at the individual aspects of each teacher's classroom.* Coach R

> *I was given all this, bombarded with all this good information, and I came into my class, and it was like I had that model, and I could see it in my mind, and it was great. I mean, I really wish other new teachers could have done that, because it was really helpful to me.* Teacher M

> *I've learned quite a bit about group work, getting the kids up, moving around, but also how to maintain the classroom management while doing it, not letting them get out of control. I'd say a lot of just getting together. Because the kids struggle with language so much, that you can ask them to explain it to you, and they don't really explain it very well, because they don't understand the language very well. But you get a group of them together, a lot of, five heads work better than just the one. So [my coach helped me with] just group things like that.* Teacher D

Third, new teachers, especially, report that the availability of coaches and the collegial, instructionally focused cultures in the schools make them happy to be on the schools' faculties.

> *I would not be happy here if I didn't have her, she's amazing. She's in my classroom, she's helping me, telling me what to do, I feel very lucky to have her. My other school, I didn't have a mentor teacher, I didn't have someone to help me out, I was this first year teacher that did not have any guidance, and I was so frustrated, because I was kind of swimming underwater. But here, I'm at peace. I love it, I love having the support.* Teacher I

> *It's just a really, really great environment, where I'm just blown away with how intelligent the teachers are, and how passionate they are about what they do. I tell all my friends outside of the school how lucky I am; they're really, really truly incredible teachers, and I feel very lucky to have their support.* Teacher N

I think that we have a great staff. Everybody is willing to learn, and people work together. I mean, you don't work with everybody, but you know, we work together pretty well, I think. I think that it's not the easiest place to teach. I think you have to have the fortitude, the wherewithal to come here. ... I feel like you learn more in this environment than you can learn in a place where everybody is comfortable, where everything is easy. I think you learn a lot more and you become, people that teach here are good teachers, some of the best teachers. So that would be the best reason to come here is that you have a good staff, and the kids are great. Teacher C

I like teaching here, I like being here. I like the support that I'm getting, and I really like the fact that everybody is really willing to help, and then-- [I am] in two different departments, but in each one I really find a lot of support, and that's what I feel is very, very important, especially for a teacher who is new. Teacher B

As explained in previous sections of this report, these two schools experience high rates of teacher turnover because they have been difficult places in which to teach. Their students are often several years behind and bring to school many of the problems associated with poverty and immigration that are significant in their lives. If such schools are to develop into places where students can learn at high levels, it is essential for them to develop into places where teachers want to teach. The findings of this study suggest that both schools, through the development of their coaching models, are creating such teaching environments.

Third, and related to this last point, our analysis strongly suggests that each school, in its own way, has created a collaborative, instructionally focused learning community in which it is the norm to work on improving teaching, where it is the norm to *seek* help rather than hide the need for help, in which it is the norm to *offer* help in the interest of improving students' opportunities to learn.

When I first started here, I felt like things were dictated to me, things I didn't understand. I just knew I'd better do them because I wanted to do a good job. And I feel like, now, when I look at the coaches, I feel as if I'm contributing to something, and they're listening to me, and we'll kind of plan together about what might make me more effective, what would be a plan of action for those classes, that lesson. It's very exciting. It's a very supportive environment. Coach O

I know Friday [the coach] is coming in with another teacher to observe my class, just to get some ideas. So, we definitely work in groups, and kind of get together and debrief what, you know, we saw, and everyone is very supportive that way. You know, everyone is just really willing to help each other out, so I think that we are great resources to each other. Teacher N

If something goes wrong first period, I'll run down to her second period and go, this lesson was terrible, you need to come in during sixth period and watch this, because I don't know what I'm doing. And she says, "Tell me what you did." So,

"OK, we'll do this." It's good advice. It's not like she's talking nonsense or telling me. She's like, well, "What do you think about this?" And it's weird because as a second year teacher, a lot of times I feel like my opinion won't count, or they're not going to listen to me. But I feel like it's so cool, because she'll say, "Oh, I didn't think of it that way." I just feel valued, which I like. ...It's good, because it makes me want to be a better teacher. It's a very healthy environment...I feel challenged and I feel like the teachers are here because they want to be here. Everyone's happy to be here and working together, we're a team, and it was not like that at my other school. Teacher I

I feel that we've become pretty tight. It's good. There is a trust that's there. I feel everybody is on the same page. We all know that it's just to help each other. It's not an assessment. The people that are in the group of coaches, I believe they have a certain personality, or they have a certain way that they carry themselves, that they realize that there are feelings on the other side, and they're very careful. Coach G

I like being able to co-work with teachers I'm working with, instead of being the all-knowing coach. It's like I'm a learner, too. And I feel like one of the strongest things that's happening at our school, is we're really working to build the sense of our school as a learning community, that everybody is learning, and everybody is sharing what they're learning, and learning from each other, and that's one of the reasons why I love the fact that people are going to watch each other teach a lot. I think that's really great, because everyone is saying I need to learn something, and maybe we will learn something from you...And there's a real sense of sharing, and camaraderie developing and that feels good. I'm glad to be a part of that. Coach A

I like the teamwork of working in your grade level. Because the other school I worked at [was] very departmentalized, very. I mean, you don't know what the other people [are doing]. They don't care about what you're doing, so there is no crossover. ... Now when I came here, it was back to being more supportive as far as we have different departments, but the teachers don't see it as this department, that department. We see the kids as the main focus. And that, I like that. I like all of the staff development on Wednesday, I like that... It was good to have other teachers to collaborate with about how's it going in your classroom, what's not working? Teacher E

I think the positive sides have been the month of preparation in July, where the first year teachers started with a syllabus ready to go, a letter to parents ready to go, the first two weeks of school planned, copies ready to go; ideas for classroom management, ideas for team building. Things that if you're a first year teacher and you walk into a new classroom, you might not have and you might not know who to turn to. I think in terms of identifying weak areas and mainly classroom management in the beginning and giving suggestions on how to correct those, that's been invaluable. Coach H

The collaborative culture is catching. Teachers' increasing desire to work with one another around instructionally-focused topics is a powerful outgrowth of coaches' work with teachers. Even teachers who have not chosen to take on a coaching role participate in the work of helping their colleagues.

> *I spent a lot of time doing not-official peer coaching, but checking on students from last year, helping teachers who I know are struggling. During my prep I'll go down to those teachers that consistently need assistance and have students of mine from last year. Probably twice a week I'm in another teacher's classroom, either assisting or checking on a former student.* Coach P

> *This has given us more energy, and focus, and drive in our teaching, than I think anybody expected. And I think people outside of the department, they always laugh at us about the amount of time we spend in staff development, and they are just cracking up now at the amount of time we're spending in these cycles. But we're thriving on it, and it's also helping everybody get over the potential lay-off thing, just keeping us focused, because most of us are not sure whether we're going to have jobs. But we all know we're doing a really good job at this. We want to keep doing it. ... So I think you'll find it's contagious. Give us six weeks with the peer coach, and then we're taking off.* Teacher F

> *The thing we emphasized is that we want to open our practice. ...When you go to a teacher's classroom and you see a teacher struggling, you just don't say, "Oh, those are great." You turn your back on your teacher if you don't say anything. We must provide support, all of us, for that teacher. That's what we want to create. It doesn't help that teacher if you say "You're doing okay" and turn your back on them instead of saying, "I see you're struggling with this [and suggest how to help]." ...That's what I want, that's the climate – the culture I'm trying to develop here.* Coach U

Fourth, many of the teachers who assumed coaching roles at Montgomery and Wilson are now knowledgeable and skillful coaches. This is no small impact considering that many of the teachers who took on these roles had little or no prior coaching experience at the start of the Clark-funded work. In a short period of time, two of these teachers have become district-certified peer coaches, two of the schools' previous peer coaches have become district-certified Literacy Administrators, and many more teachers have gained the experience of observing and debriefing lessons with their colleagues.

These individuals are increasingly aware of what they need to learn in order to coach effectively.

> *We've talked about, what if you talk to your person, and your person said that they were going to work on it, and then you go in, and they're not doing it? They refuse to do it. What do you do?* Coach G

> *I still felt like with the short amount of time that I have to view [the teacher I am coaching], I can't grasp - in a 20 minute time period, especially if you have a day where,*

and it may be an off day for [that teacher] where everything is going off - how do I pick one thing to say work on this? And a lot of them [the issues she needs to work on] are hand in hand. Student engagement, if student engagement is not high, then classroom management is not high. If routine is not there, the kids don't know what they're supposed to be doing. Coach V

Knowing, first of all, figuring out if there is a list of ten things that this person is struggling with, where is my priority? When it's classroom management, that's pretty clear, because instruction can't happen. But within instruction, I don't know how to prioritize. Then how do I make those suggestions known, not only as these are things you can work on, but I highly recommend you try this next step. I think that's key, and that's something that I don't know if I should be reading up on, if it's part of the training that we're supposed to be getting. Coach H

Fifth, as the part-time coaches reflect on their work with other teachers, they note that coaching is helping them to improve their own instruction and is invigorating their own classroom practice.

I'm definitely more aware of my follow-thru, and more aware of the quality of lessons that I give my students. Because I have found that [one of the teachers I work with] is continuously saying, "What are you doing? Can I borrow this?" So it's really important that I'm using something that's good. Coach V

I would say that the classroom peer coaches, because of the role they play this year, it has made them better teachers. They've become much more reflective and as a matter of fact, the last meeting we had, one of the classroom peer coaches said, "You know, when I'm forced to go in and work with her on this, it makes me think about, how am I doing with that. I better be good at this if I'm supposed to help this person be good at it." Bernie Nguyen

Finally, principals' knowledge and skill are growing. Principals are paying closer attention to the relationships between coaches and teachers and are therefore, continuously assessing which coaches might work well with which teachers under which set of circumstances. Principals are also beginning to take notice of their coaching staffs as a whole, coordinating the varied efforts of part- and full-time coaches as well as content administrators. Principals are even beginning to examine their relationships with coaches differently. As both Lamont Jackson and Bernie Nguyen explain, when they work with coaches, they are, in fact "coaching future school leaders."

What I'm actually doing right now, is modeling for my Literacy Administrator – how to coach coaches. My recent coaching session with [one of the Professional Developers] was very interesting because, as Jennifer McDermott says, it's hard to coach coaches, because they know the moves. I try to move with [this Professional Developer] and she says, "Are we doing what Jennifer said?"

[laughs] I say, "I don't know, I wasn't there." But what I said was, "Well, if it's good work, we all could use it, and so let's continue, let's see where this takes us." And I coached her and she expressed to me that it was very helpful. Lamont Jackson

I think I've become much better at knowing how to utilize my people resources, and also to promote people in such a way that it pushes them into leadership roles, I've gotten better at that. Bernie Nguyen

These principals also know that, having succeeded in getting the coaching designs in place, they must now figure out how to keep track of the work and ensure that its quality continues to rise. They know that this next phase of their work is important, but will not be easy.

The struggle is letting go, trusting that people are doing the work and doing it accurately, because now you have [a coach] running a group over here, you have [another coach] running a group over here, you have [a Literacy Administrator] supporting their work. Who's coaching them? Who's supporting them? Even if the work is good, you want to ratchet it up another notch. Who's watching them present [in professional development sessions] so they can get feedback? How do you provide that support? Because if they're not getting better at it, then they're going to continue to do what they know, or they're only going to have one set of eyes, their own, in which to reflect, to be able to improve the work. Lamont Jackson

I think the piece that I'd like to work on getting better at next year is having time to actually sit down individually with each of my coaches and helping them reflect on their work. And also to reflect back with them on [what I see] when I go into a teacher's classroom; [to say] this is what I'm noticing [in the classroom] and finding out from them, what they are working on with these teachers. Because if I see these drastic changes and that's what you've been working with them on, then obviously we can connect and say that it's because of your work that they're getting better at this. But I haven't had that one-on-one conversation, which prevents me from providing them the feedback they need in order to gauge and measure their effectiveness as coaches. Bernie Nguyen

Without a doubt, new challenges have arisen out of the successes of the first eighteen months of these experiments at Montgomery and Wilson.

Taken collectively, these findings mark the impressive beginnings of the design experiments at both schools in so far as they are positively impacting the lives of teachers, coaches and principals. While, as we noted earlier, no direct correlation

between coaching and student achievement can be proven as yet, there are a great many reasons to be hopeful about future outcomes. As one teacher noted when asked about the overall impact of coaching: "Since I'm more reflective, my kids are more reflective." The learning communities that have developed at Montgomery and Wilson represent, in our view, significant, school level capacity to nurture, sustain, and enhance implementation of the district's Literacy Framework and the Blueprint as a whole.

CHALLENGES TO ESTABLISHING AND IMPLEMENTING COACHING CAPACITY

The voices of principals, coaches and other teachers at Montgomery and Wilson clearly convey their view that there is great value in developing in-school coaching roles. This is very good news. However, it is important to note that there are challenges associated with taking on these roles, challenges that these schools need to address if they are going to be able to sustain their coaching work. In our view, two of these challenges merit immediate attention: 1) anxieties about coaching, especially during the early phases of the work and when teachers are resistant to the coaches' efforts; and, 2) dealing with the limited time available for coaching at Wilson in light of the design of the coaching model and teachers' needs. Although the issues of time are associated primarily with Wilson's design, we think that it would be valuable for the district and other schools to ponder the challenges at Wilson in light of the potential benefits of developing school-wide coaching models that infuse literacy instruction into all content areas. If this model is appealing to the district or to some of its schools, then it is important to understand the pluses and minuses of Wilson's first year experiment, along with whatever revisions it makes for the 2003-2004 school.

Anxieties about Coaching. In the early phase of implementing their work, Montgomery's and Wilson's coaches raised some of the same anxieties raised initially by the district-trained coaches.[26] They worried about how they would be introduced to their colleagues and whether teachers would interpret working with a coach as punishment. They worried about whether they would be seen as "snitches" for the principal. Many coaches wondered what it would be like to coach teachers who were resistant to their efforts. And, if they were relatively new to teaching, they wondered whether they a) knew enough to coach others and b) would be accepted by their more senior colleagues even if they did know enough. Finally, coaches were anxious about what the work would entail and how it would evolve. Despite these anxieties, teachers boldly stepped forward to participate in this work.

As we noted above, with rare exception, the role of coach and, more particularly, of teacher as coach, has been accepted in the two schools. This fact has reduced some coach anxieties. However, other concerns remain, particular those connected with the coaches' knowledge and skill and, therefore, with their ability to do the work well.

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[26]For a description of the anxieties experienced by the first cohort of San Diego's middle level Peer Coach/Staff Developers, see Neufeld, B., Kuwahara, Y., and Swanson, J. (February 15, 2000) Update Report: Implementation of Standards-Based Reform in San Diego City Schools. Available at www.edmatters.org

For example, one peer coach reported that she did not feel expert enough to a) coach another teacher and, b) merit the authority that should come with the role of coach. She noted:

> *I don't consider myself a pro, by any stretch of the imagination, when it comes to questioning, or any of the new focuses that we have. So not only do I feel inadequate to go in and assess her needs, I feel [that] she's not necessarily going to respect my opinion, because who am I to say that this is where she should improve? I feel like my credentials are questionable and I don't feel like I have the authority.* Coach H[27]

Another coach raised a similar concern about helping to provide literacy-focused professional development for groups of colleagues. She realizes that, after having done the presentation and practiced the skill herself, she would be in a better position to provide professional development to her colleagues than when she initially did the professional development session.

> *We've all looked back and laughed about it, that we can do the research, and we can do a presentation, but it's not internalized unless we've taught it. So now I could go back and present what I did two months ago great, because I've lived it, I've done it. But I feel like we're talking up there, and it's almost like fake, because we don't really understand it ourselves. I guess I feel like I don't know enough, but I've been asked to do it, so I do it.* Coach F

Teachers who take on these coaching roles take them on with great seriousness and with a desire to do the work expertly so that their colleagues gain from the involvement. They do not want to waste anyone's time and they do not want to appear unknowledgeable. Yet, because they are new at their roles, and, indeed, because they may be only one step ahead of their colleagues with implementing the strategies, putting themselves on the line can create considerable anxiety.

A few coaches still worry about how taking on the coaching role might interfere with the peer relationships they have with their colleagues. This is especially problematic for coaches when the teachers with whom they are working need considerable help. As the next coach notes, fear of jeopardizing peer relationships can lead coaches to avoid working with the teachers they should be coaching.

> *I used the excuse that I was busy with another teacher, which was legitimate, but...I haven't gone to observe her because I feel that she's mistrusting of peer coaches and because we're in the same department and she's not a first year teacher. I feel like it would compromise our relationship as peers. And I know she does a good job; I'm sure she could improve; but I feel uncomfortable going to observe her. So I found ways of legitimizing my not going in my head.* Coach H

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[27]This coach's judgement was not based on concerns raised necessarily by those she was coaching. Rather, she was basing her concerns on her own internal assessment of her knowledge and skill.

Finally, some coaches are anxious about how to proceed when they are assigned to teachers who do not want to use the strategies required by the district and the school.

> *I have at least one teacher who just hates workshop, and doesn't want to change the way she teaches, and really resists being coached. And we have at least one teacher who is really uncomfortable having other people in her classroom and ...she feels like anybody who's coming in sort of is evaluating her, although I think her view of that may be getting ready to change,...She really needs some help from me. ...I think there are some people who naturally pursue working with others, collaborating, and other people who feel less comfortable with that.*
> Coach A

In sum, although each of these coaches is working quite well with some teachers, they do this work while experiencing anxiety about their competence, the impact of their role on peer relations, and uncertainty about how to proceed with teachers who do not want to implement the adopted instructional reform strategies.

Time and Its Relationship to Design of the Coaching Models. Coaches who are released for most of the day generally have the time to observe and meet with teachers. They may not be able to group the teachers they work with for targeted professional development if the teachers do not share common planning periods. By and large, however, these coaches do not speak of time as a challenge to their work.[28]

Coaches who remain full-time in the classroom, though, face a number of time-related challenges. At the least complex level, teachers who work in a Lab Teacher capacity that involves them in having others observe their teaching, sometimes lack appropriate time for debriefing with the teachers who observe. This happens when the Lab Teacher and observing teacher do not have a common planning period, cannot get common release time, and cannot meet after school.

Time issues are much more complex for coaches who teach full-time and rely on substitute coverage for their coaching work, the design being tried at Wilson. These coaches raise a number of significant concerns, the first of which relates to the impact of frequent substitutes on their students' opportunities to learn. These coaches worry that their own students are being short-changed by the weekly loss of instructional time that is provided by a substitute.[29] Attendance at their all-day, off-campus retreats for coach professional development also leaves

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[28]District peer coaches who are full-time raise concerns about time that have to do with the additional roles they have, for example, assisting with book rooms and monitoring standardized test sessions. These coaches report that their other responsibilities often cut into their ability to do direct coaching.

[29]Coaches at Wilson report that they are pleased with the particular substitute who covers their classes. Nonetheless, the substitute cannot necessarily teach the content that the regular teacher would have taught if she were not coaching during their class period.

these coaches worried about the impact of their absence on students.

> *In terms of the ramifications on my class, the class that I don't see on Tuesdays is further behind than all my other classes. They're angry. They don't want me to leave on Tuesdays and they express it on Wednesday. I feel like our relationship has suffered and that can be felt in their learning and their attitude....I've asked about changing the schedule, but logistically it was so difficult to come up with a schedule that worked for everyone that to revamp it, right now is not necessarily feasible. But I think for next year I'm going to suggest that there be some sort of either rotating schedule or something that doesn't put the burden on one set of kids.* Coach H

A second problem arises because schools frequently need to re-deploy substitutes to cover the classes of teachers who are absent. When this happens, coaching does not occur.

> *I don't get to coach very often because they pull the sub all the time. So that part I find really frustrating. I think I only worked with [Teacher X] twice, and it's been random time. She never knows when I'm coming and I never know when I'm coming, and like I went to [Teacher Y] today and he went, "Oh, you're here today?" and I said, "Yes, I didn't know either." So I think there's a problem with the way they're doing the sub. ...It's not consistent, which has led to some problems. I think it would be great otherwise...* Coach E

> *We have so many absences, and substitute issues... My sub is pulled today, for instance; last week, and the week before that, too. I don't know the last time I met with [Teacher X] I think I've met with him twice. The idea was I would come in -- the way we were scheduled was brilliant; theoretically, it was brilliant. I was scheduled to come in and watch him teach, and then my block was half for watching his lesson, and then afterwards debriefing with him, and strategically looking at where he wants to improve, things of that nature.* Coach W

Despite the rationality of the plan, implementation has been difficult due to the school's need – which teachers understand – to use the substitute in other ways.

A third time-related challenge associated with Wilson's design arises due to the trade-offs that must be made in arranging substitute coverage that enables all coaches to observe the teachers with whom they are working. As a result of the exigencies of scheduling, a number of coaches at Wilson found themselves assigned to observe on days with abbreviated schedules and early dismissal time. For science peer coaches, such scheduling left them unable to observe teachers leading science labs since labs are not done on short days. Yet, it might be that the coached teacher wanted help with labs. Other coaches found themselves scheduled to see only the last ten or fifteen minutes of a class or the wrong subject for teachers teaching across disciplines, for example science and math. Despite Herculean efforts, devising a coaching schedule around the parameters of a full-time teaching load, common planning periods, an appropriate time of the

day, and substitute availability led to less than ideal coaching opportunities.

Fourth, even if substitute coverage were perfect, in reality, the design of the classroom peer coach model at Wilson does not give coaches enough absolute time or contiguous blocks of time in which to coach their colleagues. For example, if a coach has two periods available for coaching and the first of these is the teacher's planning period, then the coach and teacher can confer about the lesson to be observed. However, this arrangement leaves no time for the coach to debrief with the teacher after the observation. As a result, as this teacher explains, too much time elapses between observing and conferring when conferring must take place one week later and prior to the next observation.

> *She was coming in and would kind of sit and watch me and we would confer before. We'd talk before, and she would kind of say, "Okay, what am I looking for?" I liked that part, but the bulk of our conferring was from stuff that happened the week before, and I'd rather get the feedback right away. So I didn't really like that very much. But that was all that we could really get worked in with our schedules.* Teacher D

The short time available for coaching, and the elapsed time between coaching visits, leaves some coaches feeling that they are not making as much of an impact as they could were they to have more time available.

> *I wish I had more time to go in and script some lessons, to really debrief, and then to go back and watch another one, and hit on those things we talked about. I feel like it's kind of haphazard and scattered a little bit, and I'm making a difference in some ways, but I guess just not as organized as I would like it to be, because it's not that much time.* Coach F

There is, of course, some good news as well as a dilemma lurking in these findings. The good news is that teachers and classroom peer coaches want to implement this approach to coaching despite the challenges posed by its first year. Their concerns are about implementation and not about the potential of the role. The dilemma is that the classroom peer coaches do not want to be released more of their time in order to coach, yet they want more time to coach. At least at the start of the 2002-2003 school year, no classroom peer coach would agree to giving up any of her classes in order to devote more time to coaching. By the end of the school year, however, a few classroom peer coaches reported that they were willing to consider this option.

Coaches, teachers, and principals raised other challenges as well. For example, they wondered about how to establish coaching arrangements. To the extent that coaching pairs or groups are developed by the coaches and/or principal, they wondered how to establish trusting relationships between coaches and coached teachers. Several coaches and teachers felt strongly that teachers should select their own coaches. Yet, they also recognized that providing such open choice could lead to the same problems that arise in classrooms when students choose their partners for projects or other forms of joint work: some choices would lead to more effective coaching than

others.

A number of coaches wondered how to select a focus for coaching, how to insure that coaching had a significant impact on an important aspect of instruction. While all coaches agreed that some coaching priorities and foci should be set collaboratively with teachers, many also recognized that a teacher might not always choose to work on the most relevant aspect of her teaching, especially if doing so would require her to make significant and difficult changes.

Finally, neither school, nor any district that we know, has developed a way to assess the quality of coaches' work and then determine its impact on instruction and student achievement. As we noted in the impact section of this report, there are many factors that influence student achievement and it is likely that a combination of professional development experiences, taken together, contribute to student achievement. This makes it unlikely that anyone will be able to tease out the impact of coaching alone.

However, just as it is possible to observe and evaluate teachers' instructional knowledge and skill, it is possible to develop a valid system with which to observe coaches and assess the quality of the work they do. Establishing such an evaluation system will require the development of a rubric that details and describes significant aspects of their work implemented at different levels of quality. In our view, such a rubric and the assessment system itself, need to be developed by the district and applied to all coaches, not just those involved in the design experiments at Montgomery and Wilson. As a formative assessment, such a system could help guide further coach work with teachers as well as coach professional development. As a summative assessment, it would help schools and the district make informed decisions about individual coaches.

CONCLUSIONS

We conclude by restating the major findings we presented at the start of this report. Here, we present them again for consideration in the context of our analysis and supporting data.

- Montgomery and Wilson have been successful in creating collaborative, instructionally focused cultures in which the Blueprint defines the focus of educators' work and in which teachers understand that a) part of their job as professionals involves improving their own practice, b) their school includes teachers and administrators who can help them improve that practice, and c) they share responsibility for helping their colleagues as well as for learning from them.

- The Blueprint and its associated Literacy Framework provide the instructional content of teachers' collaborative work. The Framework, in this way, provides essential instructional coherence for the schools' professional development work.

- The task of developing instructional capacity in these schools has required considerable

skill, ingenuity, and risk-taking on the part of the principals. The task would be challenging for any principal; it is especially challenging for first and second-year principals who are simultaneously attempting to master the operational side of their schools.

- Principals have been key to the successful design and implementation of in-school peer coach positions. However, they could not have been so successful without the strong commitment of their teachers to implement the Blueprint strategies.

- The professional development underway in these schools supports the continuous development of teachers' instructional capacity with the Literacy Framework, and may, as a result sustain instructional improvement in the context of a) frequent teacher and principal turnover and b) an insufficient supply of high quality district-certified peer coaches.

- The design of coaching support developed at Montgomery, a design that provides two teachers with a reduced teaching load so that they can devote most of their time to coaching seems more effective than the design developed at Wilson which depends on full-time teachers having substitute coverage in order to coach their colleagues. Although the teachers at Wilson wanted to retain their full-time teaching loads, they and the teachers they coached realized the significant constraints this organization places on classroom peer coaches' ability to coach.

These findings extend those we reported in our December 2002 Interim Report, in which we stated that Montgomery and Wilson ought to be credited with building a remarkable amount of internal capacity in a relatively short period of time with minimal support from the district.[30] And while that accomplishment remains, the enormity of the schools' task – to design and implement this in-house capacity in the absence of highly-qualified, district-certified peer coach/staff developers – will soon be eclipsed by the enormity of their next task – to sustain this work in the absence of Clark Foundation funding.

Two years ago, neither of these schools had the extensive teacher leadership capacity that they have today. Montgomery has developed this capacity over the course of just eighteen months. This is a remarkable achievement. Wilson began its literacy-across-the curriculum work several years ago under the leadership of the previous principal. The current principal has sustained and deepened that work with the advent of classroom peer coaches while contending with all of the challenges that face a first-year principal.

Montgomery's and Wilson's efforts to build in-house capacity are meaningful approaches to achieving the Blueprint's objectives under any circumstances, but are particularly significant given the scarcity of district-trained peer coach/staff developers. At Montgomery, an increasing

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[30]Here, we are referring to the district's initial inability to supply these schools with district-certified peer coaches.

number of teachers are engaging in collaborative, participant-driven professional development activities with many teachers beginning to take ownership of their own coaching cycles. At Wilson, the July coaching sessions for new teachers helped that school's staff develop a common understanding about implementing the literacy strategies and about what it means "to teach at Wilson." The classroom peer coaches are playing an important role in sharing their knowledge, skill and expectations with their colleagues, particularly with those who are new to the school.

But with innovations, come new challenges. In the coming year, Montgomery will try to offer coaching cycles to all its ELA teachers, which may require some groups of teachers to conduct their cycle without a coach. The principal is grappling with this issue, attempting to balance the school's available coach supports with teachers' varying desire and ability to sustain their own professional development work. Wilson, too, must examine how it will achieve its ambitious goal of providing coaching support to all teachers in all content areas. Even with a large and highly capable cadre of classroom peer coaches, the logistics of this effort are daunting. Yet finding an efficient way to deliver coaching supports to teachers will be critical for the success of both design experiments in the 2003-2004 school year.

Although the Clark Foundation's involvement in this project is drawing to a close, there is still time to improve upon these design experiments and still time to figure out how to sustain them once the Foundation's support is gone.[31] The time is ideal for the district to reflect on these design experiments and share them with schools that are perhaps in the same position that Montgomery and Wilson were in at the start of this project - without district-certified staff developers, but with several highly-skilled, highly-motivated teacher leaders. Even schools that do not yet have the extant internal capacity to begin this kind of work, may benefit from exploring the different designs and implications of coaching work at Montgomery and Wilson. It is never too soon or too late to thoughtfully consider the issue of how best to build additional internal instructional capacity in schools.

For the last four years, SDCS has been engaged in an intensive, focused process of improving teaching and learning for all of the city's students. The district's plan rests on a consistent theory of instructional improvement that informs professional development and practice at all levels of the system. For students achieving at the lowest levels, the district's "Blueprint for Student Success" details a specific set of intensive, multi-year interventions. Importantly, the Blueprint describes appropriate resource allocation that will support implementation of the interventions. One key resource is the "peer coach/staff developer," a highly trained individual who is on-site four days each week to work with individual teachers as well as provide small group, targeted professional development focused on the implementation of the genre studies,

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[31] It is our understanding that the Clark monies will continue to fund coaching supports in both schools through December 2003 and that the financial responsibility for supporting the coaching designs will become the district's, at least through the end of the 2003-2004 school year.

San Diego's approach to Readers' and Writers' Workshop.[32]

Without doubt, the district will continue to struggle for some time with a shortage of skilled coaches and with a scarcity of financial resources for supporting the role. In this context, the work of these two schools, designed to overcome the shortfalls in these key resources, can provide the district with insight into alternative approaches to moving forward with the Blueprint. The work at Montgomery and Wilson demonstrates that it is possible to do this without losing the focus of the district's Literacy Framework. To the contrary, developing in-school capacity may be the most effective way for the district to enhance its efforts and sustain them in what will likely remain a context of scarce resources.

However, we want to note that no matter how much they have accomplished, these schools recognize that they could make even greater progress with additional expert coaching support. And, we want to note that, because of the extensive instructional development that has been nurtured in-house at these two schools, the challenge of finding such highly skilled coaches is likely more difficult than it was eighteen months ago. The success of the work of these two schools, we suggest, has left the district with an even greater human resource challenge than it faced at the start of this Clark Foundation project.

As we stated at the start of this report, we hoped that "our research would help the district learn from the design experiments and experiences of these schools and apply those findings more broadly throughout the district." To that end, we have provided detailed narratives about the design experiments in both schools, as well as an analysis about the implications and challenges associated with each approach. We suggest that the district use this information when it considers how to:

- Help schools that have the requisite in-house capacities create the kinds of instructional support roles seen in these two schools with or without a district coach or Literacy Administrator.

- Develop alternate strategies that would help build capacity in schools that do not yet have the capacities found in these two middle schools but which would enhance their ability to help teachers and students achieve at high levels.

- Provide schools with the supports needed to sustain and improve their in-house, organizational and instructional capacity.

Applying this knowledge more broadly throughout the district will require a coordinated effort on the part of the Instructional Leaders, coach professional developers and other relevant Institute administrators. The first step, of course, will be to share the design experiments at Montgomery and Wilson with other school leaders (principals, coaches, etc.). The second, and

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[32]Schools now have coaching support for the district's mathematics reform. Education Matters, however, is not focusing directly on the reform of mathematics instruction.

inherently more complicated step, will be to determine what the district would like other school leaders to learn from the experiences at Montgomery and Wilson. While there are any number of possible lenses through which to examine this question, we offer the following as reference points for further discussion about the significance of these coaching experiments:

- The importance of identifying potential teacher leaders and a strategy for doing so.
- The importance of encouraging potential teacher leaders to take on additional responsibilities such as planning/facilitating staff development, mentoring new teachers, part- or full-time coaching work.
- The importance of developing collaborative, collegial, instructionally focused school cultures in which teachers trust one another and feel comfortable observing in one another's classrooms and providing/receiving feedback on instructional strategies.
- The importance of knowing which approach to literacy instruction - literacy across the curriculum or literacy concentrated in the ELA department - will work best for a school given its size, student population and teaching staff.
- The importance of choosing a coaching model that will reflect the school's approach to literacy instruction as well as teachers' varied learning needs.

Education Matters' experience suggests that large, urban school districts do not have adequate vehicles for sharing or discussing this kind of information across schools. Though many school leaders' schedules are replete with meetings, there is often little continuity between one agenda and the next, significant difficulty in gathering the appropriate participants for the discussion at hand, and simply not enough time to discuss the potential for building internal capacity given the constant borage of district's day-to-day management issues. However, evidence from Montgomery and Wilson strongly suggest that it is time for the district to take seriously the need to focus attention on developing in-school capacity. To that end, the district may find it useful to share this evaluation report with other San Diego school leaders for the purpose of fostering the district's own learning around these two design experiments.

In focusing on the ways in which Montgomery and Wilson adapted to the absence of district-trained, high quality staff developers, we were reminded of something we had written in our update report of August 2000.

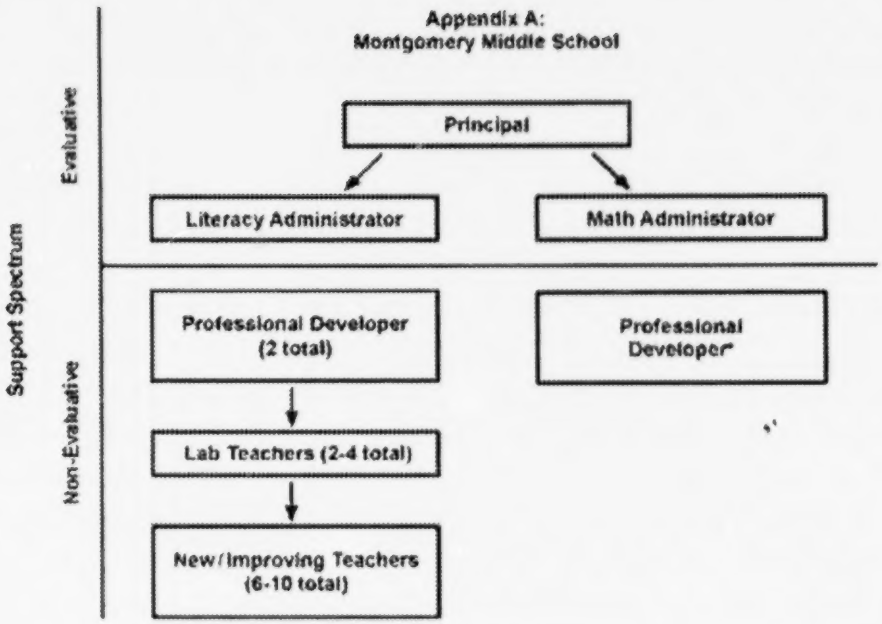
In that report, we noted that staff developers were concerned about the scale-up of their work. They recognized that they could not provide all of the coaching support needed in their schools. They recognized that it would take a long time to change teachers' practice even when the teachers were willing participants in the effort. And they knew that, even if the district was able to increase its cadre of staff developers, it would never have enough to effectively support all teachers. At that time, some staff developers pointed out the need to develop school-based teacher leadership that would sustain and further nurture the new practices. We concurred with

their views at the time and wrote the following:

> The literacy strategies that teachers are learning are not designed explicitly to create a collaborative, instructionally focused culture in schools, but they are leading to that outcome in a number of schools in our sample. This is because teachers are engaged with one another in school-based professional development and, for example, in the process of developing and implementing genre studies. As a result of their work, some teachers are emerging as leaders within their departments and teams. Staff developers suggest that this is a good thing and that these teachers should be supported in acquiring skills that will help them become, in a sense, staff developers for their colleagues. We agree that schools will do well to nurture teachers' capacity to sustain as well as advance the work being led by the staff developers. Expanded school capacity will benefit students as well as teachers; it will enable staff developers, perhaps, to spend more of their time with the teachers most in need of assistance.

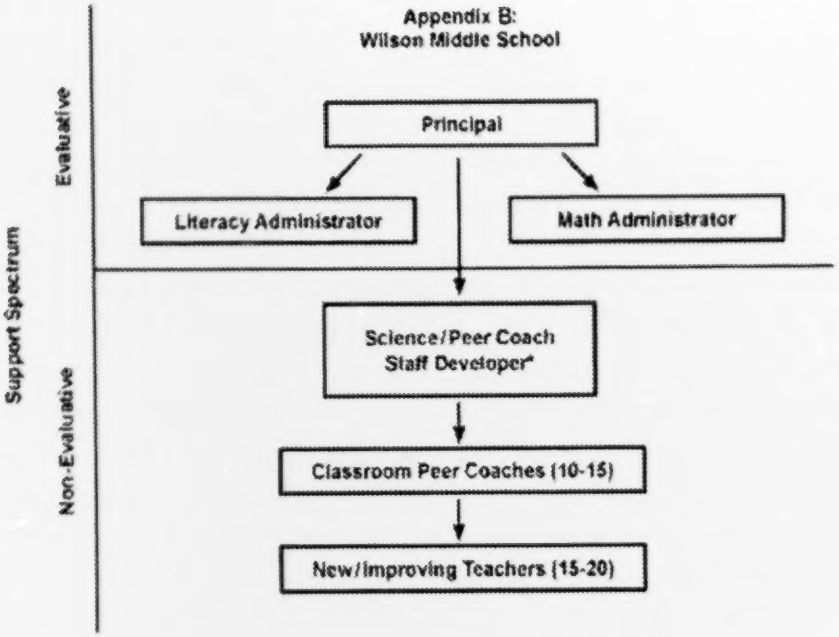
Given the initial tension between the central direction of San Diego's reform efforts and schools' existing, sometimes competing, approaches to instructional improvement, the emergence of internal capacity at Montgomery and Wilson is a milestone for the district. The design experiments at Montgomery and Wilson are facilitating the development of local ownership of a reform that was [and in some cases still is] considered by many to be overly "top-down." It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the development of local ownership at these two sites. The sustainability of the district's reform will depend on schools' like these, schools that embody the district's Blueprint not only because they understand the instructional components and theory undergirding workshop pedagogy, but because they believe that it is in the best interests of their students. In the face of uncertain budgets, rancorous school board elections and the general turmoil that comes part- and-parcel with large, urban districts, these schools have built a strong foundation for continuous, collaborative professional growth and there is much to be learned from them.

Appendix A:
Montgomery Middle School



* Though we included both the Math Administrator and the Math Professional Developer, we have not studied the math department's organization of teacher support.

Appendix B:
Wilson Middle School



* This individual will soon be the Literacy Administrator

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